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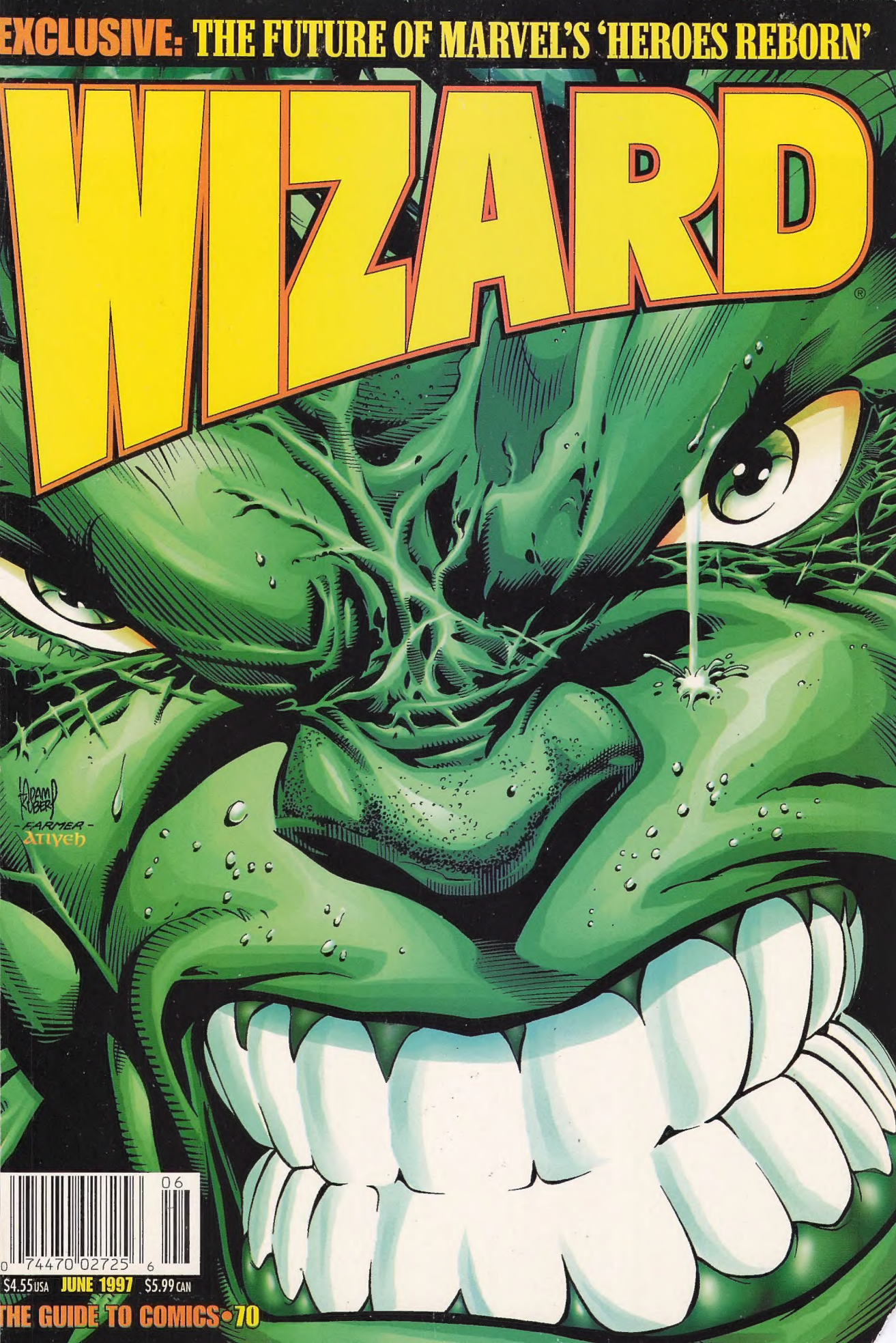

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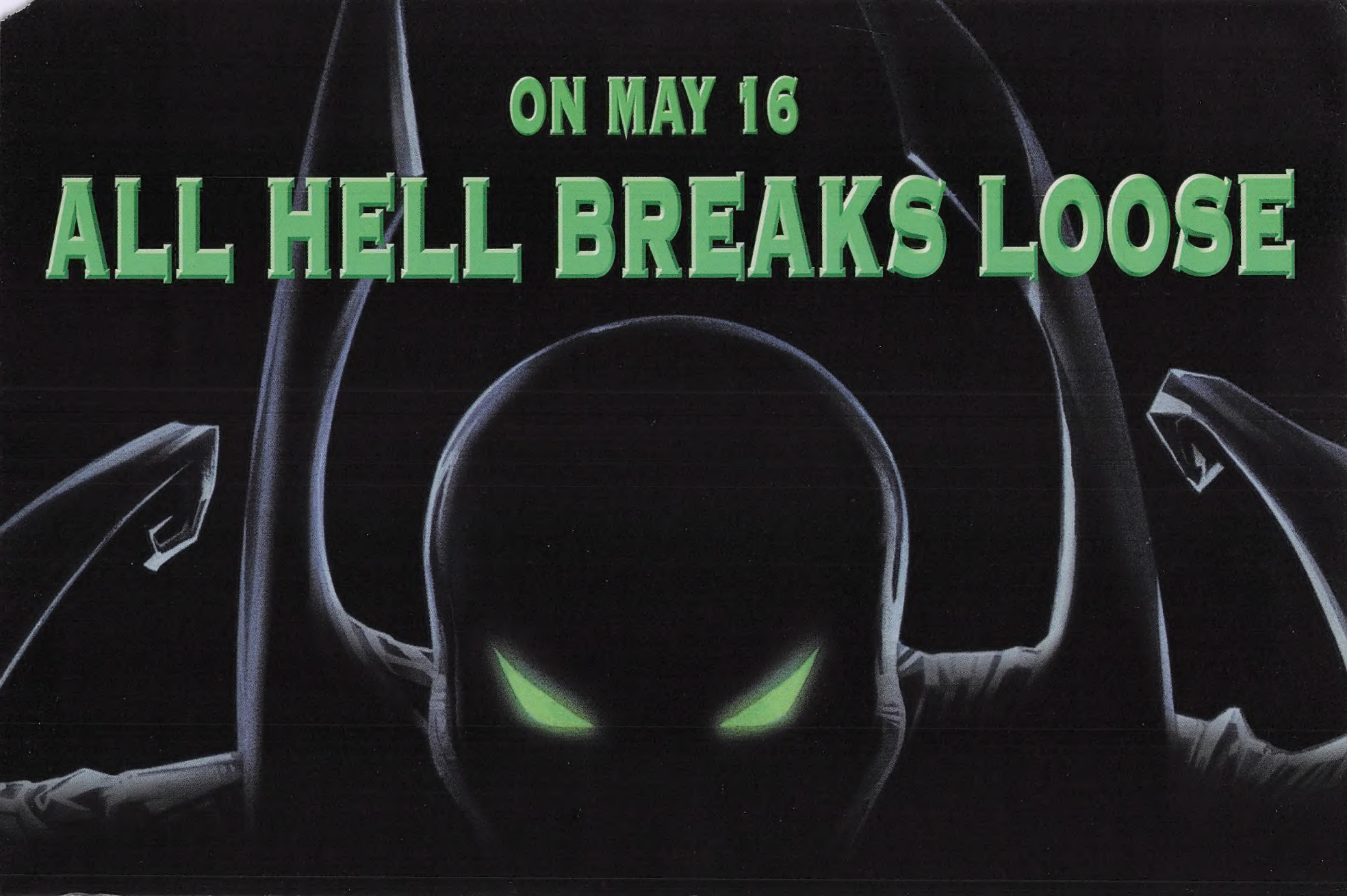
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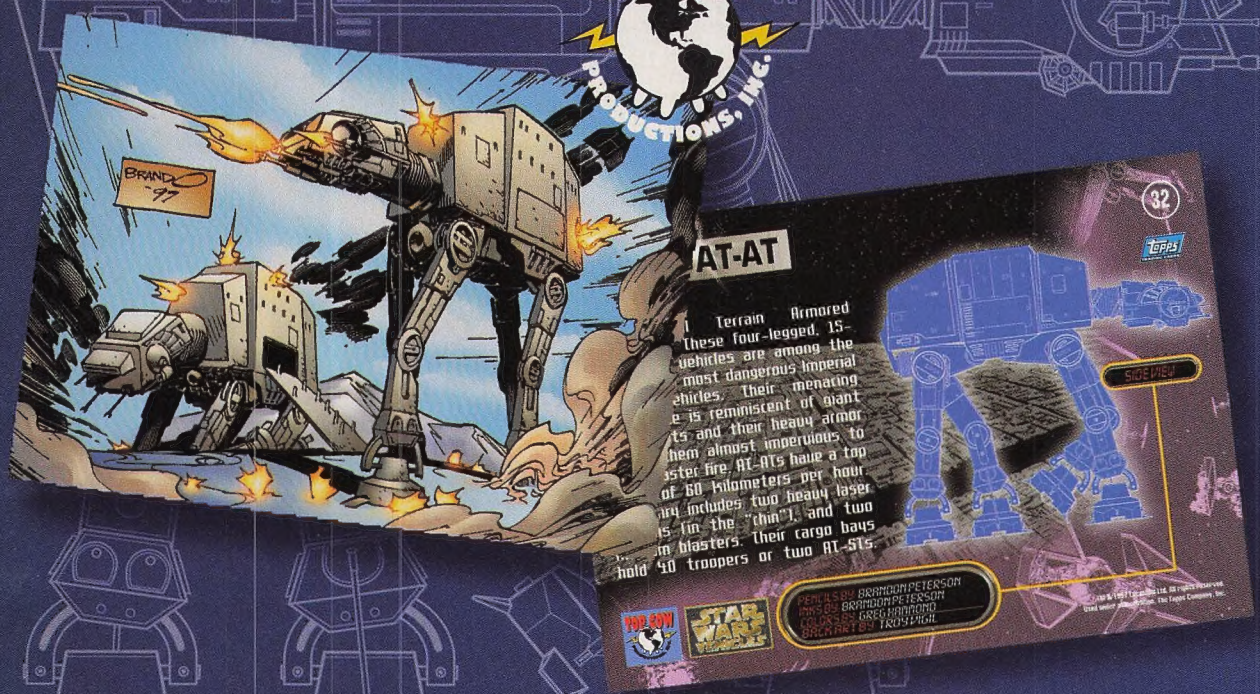

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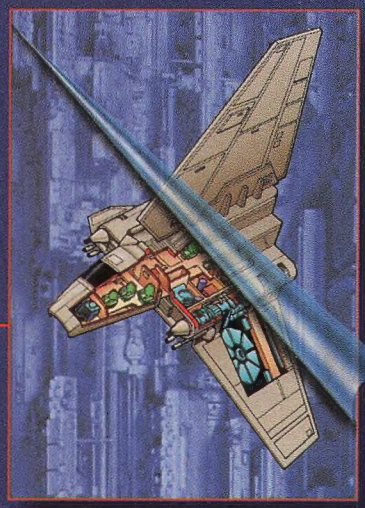

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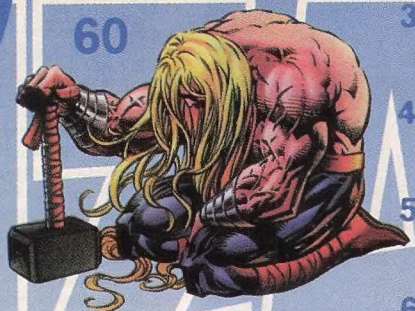
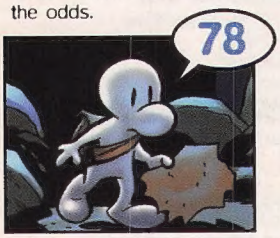


ON THE COVER
The Hulk was illustrated by Adam Kubert and Mark Farmer, and colored by Twilight Graphics. To see if the Hulk's one of the 10 toughest heroes in comics, leap to **page 60**.

Green Lantern was illustrated by Darryl Banks and Terry Austin, and colored by Twilight Graphics. Flip to **page 32** to learn how Green Lantern has beaten the odds.



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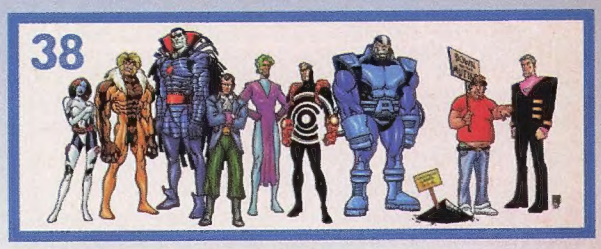

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104 CAPTAIN AMERICA
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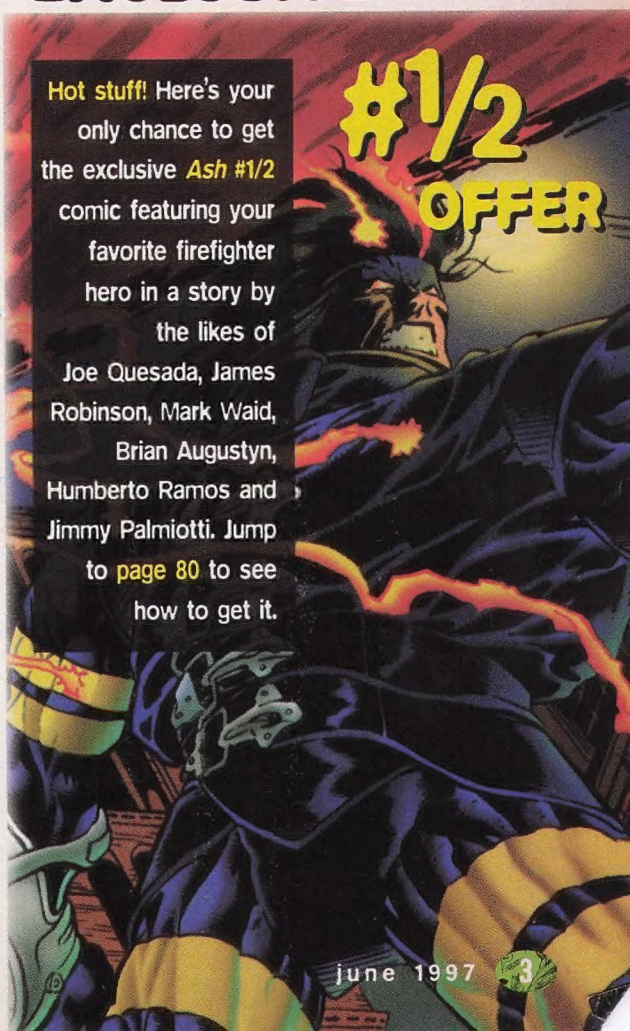
138 JACKIE CHAN
Win a signed collection of Topps' new *Jackie Chan: Spartan X* comics and a Jackie Chan wristwatch. How about that?

EXCLUSIVE



Hot stuff! Here's your only chance to get the exclusive *Ash* #1/2 comic featuring your favorite firefighter hero in a story by the likes of Joe Quesada, James Robinson, Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Humberto Ramos and Jimmy Palmiotti. Jump to page 80 to see how to get it.

"YOU LIKE ME? YOU...YOU REALLY LIKE ME?

Photo by Paul Schiraldi

CON ARTISTS

It's official—we bought the Chicago Comicon. This is a way for us to create more excitement for fans in the comic book industry. It's also a way for us to do more to help promote publishers. One of the things I really wanted out of a big show was to create an event that represents *Wizard* and its diversity—which means, in addition to comic book companies, we want to bring in toy companies, collectible card game companies, video game companies and so forth. We have the ability to bring in many of your favorite creators. We want you to be there to see how much fun you can have in a hobby *you* love.

Speaking of fun, this summer in *Wizard*, we've got lots of great stuff lined up: a new *Sci-Fi Invasion!* Special, a *Top Cow* Special and THE *Spawn Movie* Special. As for this month, we have another great Kubert cover, this one featuring the Incredible Hulk by Adam. It's a new approach for us, and I think it looks great. We also have a Green Lantern cover by artist Darryl Banks. Lots of you have been begging for us to do one, so we've finally delivered.

The Chromium card this month is Witchblade. She's hot, no doubt. And you *must* pick up the *Ash* #1/2, offered in this issue. Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti did a great job with it.

We've also got some great features this month on the Top 10 toughest heroes in the comic industry, our predictions on just who killed that mutant-hating politician Graydon Creed, writer Jeph Loeb's latest projects, the full skinny on Marvel's upcoming "Flashback Month," and an interview with *Green Lantern*'s creators on just how they beat the odds to make *GL* one of DC's most successful titles.

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. *ToyFare* goes monthly in June!

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Art Assistant Daniel Reilly
This Year's Oscar Crock "Fargo" getting snubbed for Best Picture

Contributors Brian Douglas Ahern, Dan Albaugh, Rob Allstetter, Paul Anderson, Conrad Bain, Sorrell Booke, David Borak, Matthew Brady, Steve Brown, Mikey "The Knife" Fasolo, Carl Horn, Craig Kostelecky, John B. Lacey, Ruth Morrison, Pat O'Neill, Tom Palmer Jr., Michael Searle, Marc Shapiro, Craig Shutt, Joyce Steel, Mike Wieringo

Green Lantern Cover Art
Darryl Banks and Terry Austin, colored by Twilight Graphics
Hulk Cover Art
Adam Kubert and Mark Farmer, colored by Twilight Graphics

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VP Finance Edward L. DuPré
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Office Manager Brenda Cook
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Customer Service (914) 268-3594

Foreign Licensing Marty Stever
Fax: (312) 955-7702
Advertising
Group Advertising Director James D'Adamo
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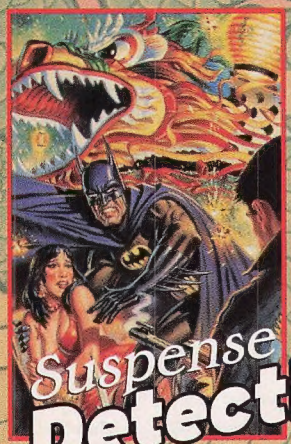
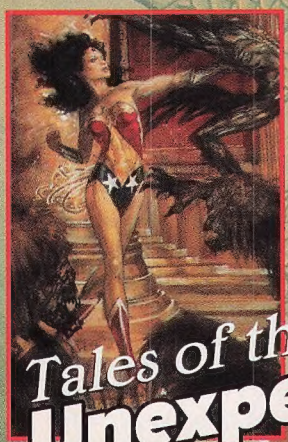
TODAY'S GREATEST HEROES ARE HEADING INTO UNKNOWN TERRITORY!



Suspense Detective



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- THE FLASH ANNUAL #10
- GREEN LANTERN ANNUAL #6
- HITMAN ANNUAL #1
- IMPULSE ANNUAL #2
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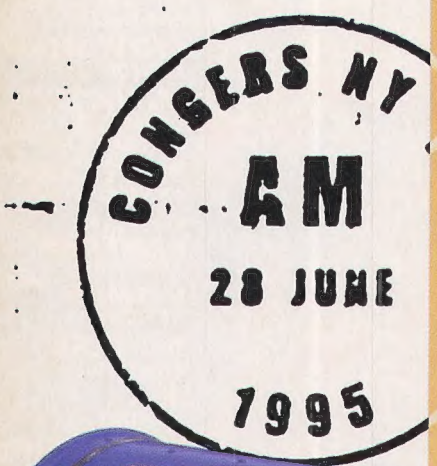
MAGIC WORDS

Cockroaches and Twinkie Filling...?

Aside from cockroaches and Twinkie filling, the only thing that's permanent is change. It is with an eye to change that I've been taking rather extensive notes on what you, the readers, have been discussing in your letters to "Magic Words" since about...oh...since about when I started doing this column way back in *Wizard* #32.

Those notes, derived from your letters, greatly impact upon the magazine you hold in your hands. Every month, we make small, subtle changes based on what you'd like to see. This fall, we're planning big, obvious changes in *Wizard* based on your letters. We already have a few feature articles in the works you've been asking for, and a big all-encompassing revamp based on your letters is in the works for late '97. So keep 'em coming. Let us know what you'd like to see in our mag. We'll do our best to deliver.

Oh, yeah—Chris Blair, the original Tattoo-Boy from way back in *Wizard* #61, wrote in to say he was happy to see the letters in support of tattoos that ran in issue #65's "Magic Words" and that he was "sorry about all the death threats" I received. Heh, heh, heh. Looks like he hasn't seen #68 or #69 yet.



Dear Wizard,

Why does your action figure price guide list figures out of their packaging at such a low price? For example, a Power of the Force II Princess Leia figure is listed in *Wizard* #67 at $35. But if I open the toy, all of a sudden it's only worth $10! Does this mean that the figure is only worth $10 and the package is worth $25? Please tell me that's not true!

Doug Ewing
Keokuk, IA

I won't bother telling you it's not true. I'll turn that task over to erstwhile Iowan Scott Beatty, resident toy guru and head-geek-in-charge on ToyFare, our new collectible toy magazine that debuts monthly in July. Take it away, Scott...

"Actually, I'm a former Pennsylvanian once exiled to the Iowa Zone....

"Most action figures cost about $1.20 or so to make, including packaging. The $5.99 you pay at the store is due to retail mark-up. All values above that are influenced by after-market demand. As for the difference between carded prices and 'loose' prices, it's analogous to new car depreciation—once you drive it off the lot, you lose about 20% of the car value, no matter how 'new' it is. When you crack open an action figure's blister card, however, the depreciation is about 80%, 'cause it's 'used,' for all intents and purposes. But we at ToyFare recommend you play with the durn things, value or no."

Wizard,

I know I'm writing about a subject that has been discussed already in this magazine, but I have something to say. What I'd like to discuss is the subject of Spider-Man killing a villain.

A while back, readers wanted to know why Spider-Man didn't kill Carnage while he had the chance, knowing full well Carnage would be back to kill again. Readers wrote in to *Wizard* either in support of Spidey killing Carnage or against it. Those who were against it said that it wasn't in Spider-Man's character to kill.

That's true. But while it is not in Spider-Man's character to kill, I believe that people do things that are out of character all the time. If Spider-Man were to kill a villain, it would be out of character, but like all things done out of character, it would happen for a reason. And thereby hangs a tale.

Y'see, it *would* be in Spider-Man's character to regret his actions if he killed Carnage, to grieve over what happened and to wonder if what he did was right or wrong. Spider-Man is still human, and, as mentioned above, all humans occasionally do things out of character. I think that the premise of Spider-Man killing would make for an interesting story and could make for an interesting look into Spider-Man's psyche.

So what do you think, Jim?

Phillip Ginn
Sacramento, CA

I agree. Make no mistake about it: Spider-Man is not a killer, just as most of us out here in the real world are not killers. But you're right, Phillip—

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we real people all do things on occasion that are out of character. Who hasn't wondered why a friend of theirs acted strangely in a certain situation? And why should fictional characters be any different?

Part of good fiction writing is writing characters as if they were real. A fictional character, just like a real person, should have a certain makeup to their personality. But we all have our bad days. We all do things about which we look back and say, "What the hell was I doing there?" Properly handled, the ramifications of Spider-Man killing someone—as he did, waxing the Green Goblin in Peter Parker: Spider Man *#75—could make for a pretty interesting story. Let's see if Marvel follows up on it.*

Dear Wizard,

When I was reading the letters column in DC Comics' *Hitman* #2, I came upon something strange. People wrote in saying how much they liked *Hitman* #2. How can this be? How can they say how good an issue is before it comes out?

Brad Martinez
Marrero, LA

It's like this: DC Comics (and several other publishers) sends out black-and-white preview copies of many of its issues for press review and for the purpose of getting feedback to run in letter columns. Such is the case here. Wanna get on the list? Hint: Write a number of good, insightful letters to your favorite comic publisher. Maybe they'll put you on their advance list.

Dear Wizard,

1) Is *Madman Comics* still being published? I don't think I've seen a new issue since January of 1996.

2) Wouldn't it be cool if Spider-Man got the Captain Universe powers again and screwed with the whole "clone saga" timeline so that it never happened?

3) What happened to *Shade, The Changing Man*? The most recent issue I can find is #39.

John Burleson
Lemoore, CA

1) Well, you've seen one. Madman Comics *#10 hit in January '96, but it took until November '96 for #11. In the meantime, creator Mike Allred worked on the Madman yo-yo, a Madman trading card set, a couple of movie-related things and the upcoming* Superman/ Madman *three-issue crossover. August should see the debut of Allred's new* Red Rocket 7, *at which point Dark Horse Comics swears up and down they'll be getting a book a month from Allred.*

2) Nope.

3) It's been canceled, but there's plenty of Shady goodness left after #39. The series finally wrapped up in 1996 with issue #70.

Hey, Jim,

While looking through my old *Green Lantern* comics, I was once again impressed by the artwork of former *GL* artist Pat Broderick. I think he's very good. Why isn't he more popular?

Chris Hyatt
Providence, RI
CIHRI@aol.com

Geez, ya got me. Maybe because he's never worked on a top-flight title to showcase his stuff. I'm also a Broderick fan. If you like his Green Lantern *stuff, you might also want to try his runs on* Micronauts *(#19-#34) and* Fury of Firestorm *(he did at least the first year's worth).*

Dear Wizard,

I was wondering if comic artists actually collect comics. If they do, do they collect only the ones that they draw, or do they collect comics in general?

Danny Jorgensen
Ely, NV

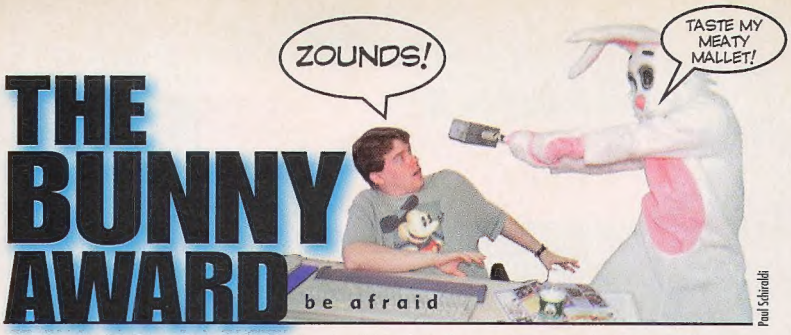
Let's ask a few.

Jim Balent, artist on DC Comics' Catwoman *and Chaos! Comics'* Purgatori: *"I collect. I tend to follow artists more than I follow titles. I'll read anything by Frank Miller, Bill Sienkiewicz, Frank Thorne or Adam Hughes. I've always collected comics because I love them. But I also collect them because I think it's important to be aware of what other artists are doing. After all, I've got to stay in competition with them."*

Brent Anderson, artist on Homage Comics' Astro City: *"No, I don't collect comics anymore. I still have kind of an informal collection of old stuff I like.*

THE BUNNY AWARD

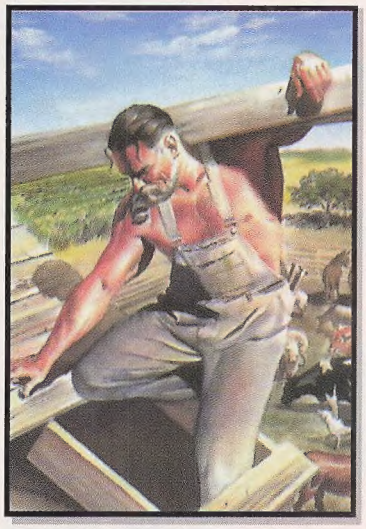
be afraid



Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

G'day, Jim,

I loved the article in *Wizard* #65, "Thy Will be Done," telling of all the "hidden" *Kingdom Come* art. Craig Kostelecky didn't miss a thing—almost! Here's one thing Craig missed. I'll confine myself to the one panel, promise!



Try *Kingdom Come* #1, page 23, panel 3. In this panel, Superman is carrying two wooden planks and has three iron nails in his pocket. Is this a crucifixion allusion? Perhaps an observation of the events that led to Clark's exile?

Lisa J.M. Savige
Richmond, Victoria, Australia

You're right on, Lisa. According to Kingdom Come *artist/co-creator Alex Ross, "I made sure that I worked that one in there. It's one of the most often-noted intentional symbolic scenes I put in* Kingdom Come." *Alex annotates this and many other scenes for the DC/Graphitti Designs hardcover collection of* Kingdom Come. *Check it out.*

I've got a run of Groo that I love, I've got some old Lee/Kirby Fantastic Fours. But I really don't keep up with anything anymore."

Chuck Wojtkiewicz, who's painting covers for some of Acclaim Comics' Classics Illustrated line: "I'm a comic accumulator, not really a collector per se. I just let 'em build up in a big box. But I always pay special attention to the manga stuff, especially Appleseed. The comics that I do, I give away to friends."

Dan Jurgens, DC's Teen Titans writer/artist: "Sure, I collect comics. Preacher is a strangely compelling read these days. Some comics I collect just for the art, like anything by Michael Golden, and some I read just for the curiosity, like the 'Heroes Reborn' stuff. Basically, I'm still a fan. I really love comics, and I think there are more good books out today than there have been in many years."

Dear Mr. McLauchlin,

1) What is artist Richard Bennett doing these days? I like his intricate style.

2) Is Buddy Scalera's first name really "Buddy," or is it a nickname?

3) Do you guys also find Marvel core hero continuity hard to follow?

4) The last "Batman" film was paper-thin. Any chance of a less-action/more-plot "Batman & Robin"?

Answers would be great.

Mitch Durnell
Springfield, OH
BitjackX@aol.com

1) Bennett just finished up the last issue of Brass, his three-issue mini-series for WildStorm. He's now inking over Jim Lee's pencils for StormWatch #47. He also recently inked the Deathblow/Wolverine crossover.

2) It's a nickname. His real first name is "Louis." So we occasionally refer to him as "My Enormous Friend Louis," just

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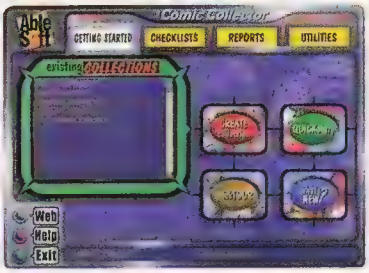

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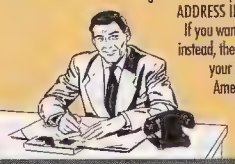
(Formerly The Comic Collector '97)

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Wizard Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on page 12 of "Magic Words" (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your REGULAR ADDRESS INFO to WizMarc@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, the only way to do this is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").



PEN PALS

Kevin Williams
Age: 22 Sex: Male
16632 Sequoia St., Apt. F
Hesperia, CA 92345
Likes: *Superman, Vampirella, Strangers in Paradise*

Eddie Jones
Age: 18 Sex: Male
314 S E. A St.
Stigler, OK 74462
Likes: X-titles, *What If?, Spawn*

Steve Perkins
Age: 13 Sex: Male
R.R. 5, Stanton Road
Cobourg, Ontario, Canada
K9A 4J8
Likes: *X-Men, Fantastic Four, The Thing*

Maya Henderson
Age: 13 Sex: Female
20611 Balfour #4
Harper Woods, MI 48225
Likes: All X-titles, Extreme/Maximum titles, WildStorm titles

Matthew T. Bellino
Age: 15 Sex: Male
88 Ramapo Ave.
Staten Island, NY 10309
Likes: *Creed, Vortex, Snowman*

David Wilson
Age: 15 Sex: Male
1103 S. Kingsway
Seffner, FL 33584
Likes: *X-Men, Spider-Man, Venom*

Sherrie
Age: 16 Sex: Female
15196 Paseo Largavista
San Lorenzo, CA 94580
Likes: *Shi, The X-Files*, most Image titles

like the guy in that episode of "Cheers." Yes, that is an allusion to Buddy's size. And yes, that is a fat joke.

3) Yep.

4) Nope.

Answers are great, ain't they?

Dear Wizoid,

1) How did Bucky die?

2) Why do the writers of "The Simpsons" TV show use "Clockwork Orange" stuff so much?

3) In a fight between Doomsday and Onslaught, who do you think would win?

Eric Bojorquez
La Puente, CA

1) Bucky and Captain America were hanging onto a Nazi drone plane loaded with explosives, trying to defuse it. Cap's grip on the plane was very tenuous. Cap fell off. Bucky didn't. Plane went boom. No more Bucky. And he's stayed dead!

2) Wouldn't you? It's fun to draw people's eyeballs wired wide open.

3) Doomsday.

Dear Jim,

My wife and I have just put our house up for sale. So I've been cleaning useless knick-knacks, spare parts and other eccentric garbage from the house. I pulled out a stack of old comic books, and one stood out from the rest. The publication was entitled *Samurai Santa*, and it was published by Solson Comics. Feeling compelled to read the stupid thing one last time before throwing it in the recycling bin, two points stood out in my mind:

1) It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be.

2) Jim Lee pencils it.

Was this done by the "Jim Lee" of WildStorm Productions and *Fantastic Four* fame?

Ed Collett
Coquitlam, B.C., Canada

A rather embarrassed Jim Lee of WildStorm Productions and Fantastic Four fame admits, "I did it. But I didn't really pencil it. I did finishes and inks over someone else's layouts. I think they laid it out on typing paper, which is about half the size an original comic page should be drawn at. It doesn't look the best. The only panel I thought turned out any good was the last one. I did it just before I started working at Marvel, and it must have come out in early 1986 or so. I really didn't know what I was doing at the time, but I know I was happy to have the work."

Dear Magic Words,

A query for Jimmy Palmiotti, or any other respectable inker you can find: How do you ink something that doesn't have a black outline, such as the flame in Ash's hair or gauntlets? How do you ink fire in general? I love drawing Ash and I just wanted to know how I could get around this particular problem.

Chad Wm. Porter
Weston, Ontario, Canada

Any brief examination of my rolodex would find many inkers more respectable than Jimmy Palmiotti, but I asked him anyway. He said, "There are actually two ways. One is to redline it. That means ink it in red pen, and by doing that, the colorist will know that the line is eventually to be dropped out. The other way is just to ink it regularly, and send a note to the colorist to drop out the line. With the computer coloring that many people use today, dropping lines out is an easy process."

Jim,

Who is better-looking in your opinion: Fairchild, Rainmaker or Freefall?

Josh Shaffer
Morris Plains, NJ
ZORAC16@aol.com

None of the above, since all three are fictional characters. Please get a better grip on reality and try again.

Hey, Wizard,

We, the huddled masses, have endured your tyranny long enough! Just what do you guys think you're trying to pull? You know what I mean. I'm talking about the "CBIQ" that runs monthly in *Wizard*! For the last several months there have been only 19 questions, not the 20 there are supposed to be. Are you guys running out of questions, or are you trying to rip us off? I, on behalf of the entire readership, demand retribution! What form of repayment, you ask? I'll leave that to your discretion. But here's a suggestion: I like pie.

Greg Simons
Cincinnati, OH

Okay, okay, okay. We give. As of Wizard #69, all "CBIQ"s are query-packed with 20 questions, as advertised.

By the way, I also like pie.

Dear Wizard,

When I received issue #66 of your wonderful magazine in my mailbox, I was very excited to open it up and read it. But excitement turned to dismay and, quite frankly, fear after I read "Dark History" (a complete guide to Dark Horse Star Wars continuity) by Andy Lee.

After completing the article, I read Mr. Lee's tagline, "While researching this feature, Andy Lee got in tune with the Force, accidentally vaporized Ankeny, Iowa, and is now hiding from the Feds." How could this happen? Ankeny, Iowa has been my hometown since I was a boy. Now it has been vaporized by a writer tinkering with an ancient fictional religion? I ran to the window to confirm this tragedy for myself. Salvation! Ankeny had not been destroyed! There it was, outside my window, just like always.

I would appreciate it if you could pass the message along to Mr. Lee that Ankeny is perfectly safe. We're still in one piece, and although we were given quite a scare by his article, there are no hard feelings. Our city council has contacted the FBI and informed them of our situation. They've called off their manhunt.

Tom Brazelton
Ankeny, IA

PENPALS

Gonad want Pen Pals
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Dallas, TX 75228-5304.
Gonad like *Sandman, X-Men, Green Lantern*. Write Gonad!

Kendall Stump
Age: 25 Sex: Male
609 Colorado St.
Goshen, IN 46526
Likes: *Thor, Silver Surfer*, X-titles

Jasper Hanebuth
Age: 20 Sex: Male
Nienburgerstr. 40
29323 Wietze, Germany
Likes: *Gen13, Xenozoic Tales*, all Legend titles

Danny Morgan
Age: 20 Sex: Male
2401 S. Lakeshore Blvd. #12107
Austin, TX 78741
Likes: *Gen13, Uncanny X-Men, Gunsmith Cats*

Brian, 18/m
bsnavely@linux.hhs.ad12.k12.co.us
Super-titles, X-titles, *WildC.A.T.s*

Stephen Hackney, 13/m
Tickman100@aol.com
The Tick, Scud, Evil Ernie

Joey Gibson, 13/m
KnobKnocker@aol.com
X-Men, Fantastic Four, WildC.A.T.s

Thomas J. Tarvid, 26/m
armytom@aol.com
Spider-Man, X-titles, *Grendel*

Jeff Rogers, 15/m
NateG164@aol.com
X-titles, Spider-titles, Super-titles

Michael Sims, 18/m
MstYoda@aol.com
Sin City, Madman, Preacher

WILDC.A.T.S X-MEN

The Silver Age

They Meet Again!

Scott Lobdell
Jim Lee
Scott Williams

COMING IN JUNE

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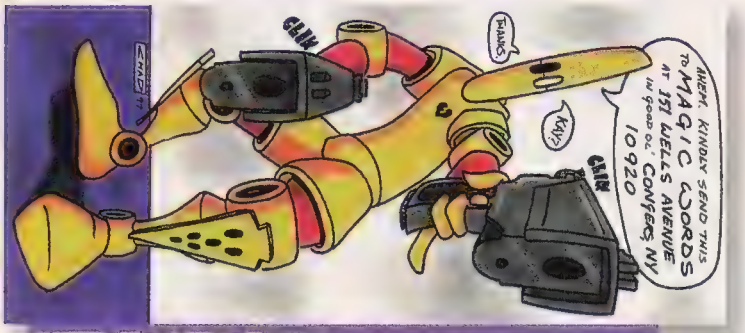
FROM WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS AND IMAGE COMICS

LETTER ART

Fans who had their letter art printed this month will each receive copies of *Adventures in the DC Universe* #1 and #2 autographed by John Delaney, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, a snazzy *Wizard* T-shirt and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins the signed comic, issue, shirt and cap, plus an original sketch by Delaney! (Thanks for the stuff, John!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address **and a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope.

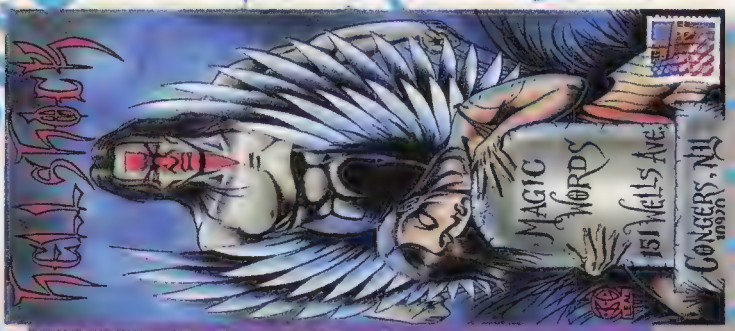
envelope of the month

GHOST RIDER Rudy Ledesma



SCUD Chad Wm. Porter

GOLDEN AGE GREEN LANTERN Pete Schmitt

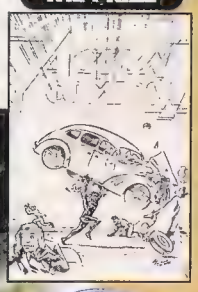


HELLSHOCK Benny G. Leal

we're in the home stretch...

Our mistake. It wasn't Ankeny that was vaporized. It was 12 square blocks' worth of Akron, Ohio. Not that anyone would notice.

THE PRIZE



Jim,

I was recently at a comic show and heard people talk about a 12-inch Ben that has brown boots. I talked to a guy at one of the booths and he said that it was just a myth. Is it true, or is it a myth?

Josh Steenwyk
Brenham, TX

Ah, good ol' 12-inch Ben. No one knows for sure if he ever really existed. Some think he did. Some even claim to have seen him. But others say he's just a myth.

Those who believe say that he was a joy of a man, only a foot tall, even in his trademark brown boots. They say that he wandered the comic shows of America, always with a smile on his face and a kind word for everyone. People loved to see him. But one day, he simply disappeared. Some say that he just wandered off into the sunset one Sunday at 6 p.m., at the end of yet another show. Another legend has it that he fell into a quarter box at a show one day and was crushed to death between two near-complete runs of ROM: Spaceknight, his tiny body never to be recovered. All we know for sure is that 12-inch Ben is nowhere to be found today.

Was he real? Or maybe just a myth, a collective longing on the part of showgoers everywhere for a pure soul, a friendly face? The world may never know.

Just as I may never know how we keep coming up with the clever taglines like the one you're about to read. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

If it were completely up to him, Jim McLauchlin would probably never wear pants. Good thing it's not up to him.

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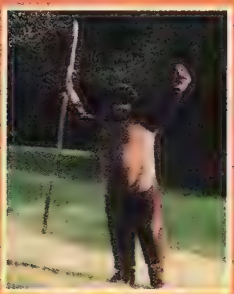
'HEROES RETURN' from 'Reborn' in September

"The Lost World" predicted to be this year's hot Halloween costume trend. "The suit sure looked cool, but as soon as little Timmy went near the microwave, BAM!, he went up like a baked potato with an M-80 in it," commented Timmy-speckled witness.



Ewok beaten at recent showings of "Star Wars: The Special Edition." "He started chanting, 'Yub, yub,' so I punched him in the throat and went to town on him with a tire iron," boasted Ewok-defiler.

DC relaunches Ragman as a Bad Girl. "We just saw pencils on the first issue and they look great!" commented DC spokesperson. "It might be premature to say, but it's lookin' like we've got another Takion or Firebrand on our hands!"

Get ready for the one-and-only Marvel Universe. The "Heroes Reborn" characters—the **Fantastic Four** and all the **Avengers**—are officially back where they belong in September, courtesy of the *Heroes Return* mini-series.

"The concept for the series came from a mega-creator head-banging Marvel editorial session," said **Peter David**. "I'm going to try to incorporate the best of everyone's notions into a satisfying package that folds the characters back into the regular Marvel Universe." That package will take the form of a four-issue, self-contained weekly mini-series shipping in the four weeks of September. David writes, **Salvador Larroca** (*Excalibur*) provides the pencils and **Art Thibert** (*X-Men*) inks. So the big question is: Just how do the heroes return from the "pocket universe" that they currently inhabit?

"I've heard many good theories from fans," said series editor Bobbie Chase. "But we're not giving it away. All I can say is: Watch out for Franklin Richards." Franklin, the son of the Fantastic Four's Mr. Fantastic and Invisible Woman, is prominently featured at the end of *Marvel Universe: Onslaught*, the book that sent the heroes to the pocket universe. So will Onslaught be the mechanism that brings the heroes back?

David said no: "We want to avoid repeating what we already did. We're going to tell a story here that is not 'Onslaught 2.' It's been hinted that Franklin is a major link between the universes. He'll be the key."

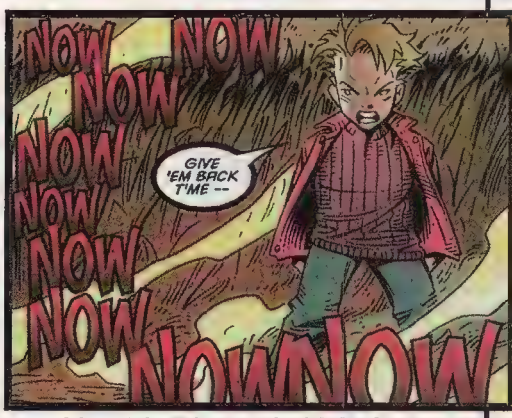
As *Heroes Return* brings the missing heroes back into the Marvel Universe, the question of how they'll react to their new/old surroundings will also be addressed. David continued, "We won't act like the whole thing never happened. That would be insulting to fans. We don't want to make 'Heroes Reborn' readers feel they've wasted their time and money.

"The heroes will have memories of the 'Heroes Reborn' Universe," David said slyly. "People will find that what happened in the other universe *mattered*."

After the *Heroes Return* mini-series, the four "Heroes Reborn" titles re-enter the Marvel Universe. At press time, no creative contracts for post-*Heroes Return* series had been signed. Marvel has verbal agreements with **Kurt Busiek** and **George Pérez** to write and pencil *Avengers*, **Mark Waid** and **Ron Garney** to do *Captain America* and Busiek to write *Iron Man*. These deals are not final, and may change pending actual contracts. No creative team on *Fantastic Four* or penciler for *Iron Man* is yet on the horizon.

The four monthly titles will return in progression, with one title each debuting its "return" in the months of September, October, November and December. No final decision has been made as to numbering, although Marvel has confirmed that numbering will not continue on from "Heroes Reborn" with #13 issues.

Marvel is also looking to restart a ***Thor*** title, although one will not appear until 1998. ■ *Jim McLauchlin*



Franklin Richards may hold the key to the heroes' return

HEROES RESHUFFLED

"From day one, 'Heroes Reborn' has been mired in controversy," said **Rob Liefeld**. "To be honest, I feel really relieved that it's over for me."

Marvel Comics has announced that Liefeld's involvement in his two "Heroes Reborn" books (*Avengers* and *Captain America*) has been terminated. Marvel cited low sales as reason for Liefeld's termination.

So where does Marvel go from here? To **Jim Lee**, the man currently overseeing *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*, the other half of "Heroes Reborn." Lee's crew now takes on *Avengers* and *Captain America*, seeing them through to the "Heroes Reborn" conclusion, as each title hits #12.

From issue #8 through #12, *Avengers* will be written by **Walt Simonson** (*Weapon Zero*) and penciled by **Michael Ryan** (*Grifter*). For issues #7 through #12, *Captain America* will be written by **James Robinson** (*Starman*) and penciled by **Joe Bennett** (*Amazing Spider-Man*). ■ *JM*

ahead

THE NEW X-MEN!

PÉREZ KILLS FANS!

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THIS SUMMER, THE X-MEN FACE BASTION AND THE NEW MUTANT-HUNTING THREAT OF THE PRIME SENTINEL!

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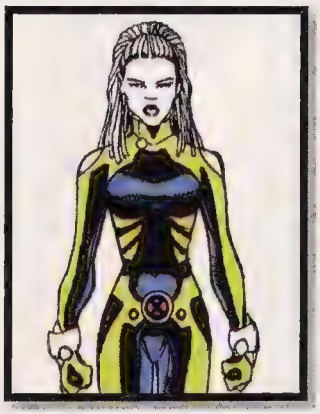
Meet the New X-Men!

Talk about hype. **Marvel Comics** has announced that there will be two all-new characters introduced into the **X-Men** in this summer's big X-crossover, "Operation: Zero Tolerance" (also referred to as "No Exit"). Though details are still sketchy, *Wizard* spies dug up the dirt on the two new X-Men.

Name: Maggot
First Appearance: April's *Uncanny X-Men #345*
Age: Unknown
Sex: Male
Occupation: Wanderer
Nationality: Australian
Powers: "The man has arguably the oddest powers in the history of mutantkind," said X-scribe **Scott Lobdell**. This character has two slug-like creatures about 3 feet in length that drape themselves on his body. According to Lobdell, the slugs can eat through anything. They can also siphon energy off other people, Marvel sources indicate. "The question to ask," said Lobdell, "is whether *he* is the mutant or the slugs are the mutants."
His Story: "Maggot sees the X-Men as a necessity in getting what he wants," said Lobdell. "He's got a secret agenda. My understanding is that he also has something to do with Joseph [a.k.a. Magneto] and what happened with Magneto's de-aging and amnesia."



Name: Dr. Reyes
First Appearance: April's *X-Men #65*
Age: 23
Sex: Female
Occupation: Physician
Nationality: Puerto Rican
Powers: Dr. Cecilia Reyes will have a protective, transparent shield surrounding her body that can deflect objects. In the beginning, she won't know how to control her powers. "This armor will be visible around her only when something actually hits the shield," said Lobdell. "It still remains to be seen what the full capabilities of this shield are."
Her Story: "She's worked herself up from the streets and has a career that she's dedicated to," said Lobdell. "Unlike many of the X-Men, she has an entire life outside of being a mutant and it completely crashes because of Operation: Zero Tolerance. She'll cause problems because she really doesn't want to be with the X-Men. She is resentful about the fact that she's hanging out with them and that being a mutant has ruined her life." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

DC's Power Source Revealed in 'Genesis'

Where does power come from in the DC Universe?

DC Comics answers that question in ***Genesis***, a massive crossover taking place in August. Similar to 1996's *Final Night* series, *Genesis* will be a four-issue weekly mini that ties into all DCU books coming out that month.

"The mini-series is self-contained," said **Paul Kupperberg**, editor of *Genesis*. "Most DCU titles will, in some way, reflect the story and be affected by it."

Genesis, written by **John Byrne** (*Wonder Woman*) and drawn by **Ron Wagner** (*Book of Fate*), revolves around Jack Kirby's Fourth World and the **New Gods**. According to Byrne, *Genesis* stems from a story he wrote in *Action Comics* #600 in which energy (a God-wave, so to speak) from the destruction of the "Old Gods" homeworld was released and shockwaved across the universe. As this God-wave bounced through the universe, it left portions of its power in its wake. *Genesis* deals with the God-wave's inevitable return to its source, which appears to be the fabled powerful Source sought out in *Jack Kirby's Fourth World* (another book by Byrne).

"There's a bad guy who realizes the remains of the God-wave will be coalescing in one place to be claimed by whoever gets there first," said Byrne. "The snag is that, to get to that place, you have to go *through* the God-wave...and we don't know what that will do."

Genesis will explain how power flows in the DCU, and how things like a **Green Lantern ring** or the **Flash's Speed Force** work. In addition, Kupperberg confirmed that throughout the *Genesis* story, **Wonder Woman** will actually be dead, but emerge from *Genesis* much more powerful than before. "The mini-series is being written by John Byrne, after all," said Kupperberg.

Darkseid, the New Gods' ultra-foe, also plays a role in *Genesis*. "I think that since it's dealing with the 'Source,' it's safe to say that Darkseid will have his fingers in there," said Kupperberg. ■ *Matthew Senreich (additional reporting by Patrick Daniel O'Neill)*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

- **DC's "Heroes Reborn"?** Maybe. The DC relaunch hinted at last issue has a working title: Tangent Comics. It also has top-notch talent behind it. Our spies place Kurt Busiek, Todd Dezago, Chuck Dixon, Dan Jurgens, Karl Kesel, Ron Marz, John Ostrander and James Robinson working on projects. The rumored theme: Complete character revamps in an "alternate reality" setting.
- **Death of Spider-Man?** With Kurt Busiek gravitating toward *Avengers* and *Iron Man*, and Pat Oliffe gearing up for *Marvel Team-Up*, where does that leave *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*? Maybe nowhere. Rumors swirl that the title will be canceled somewhere between #25 and #29.
- **The End of Gen^{13} as We Know It!** And WildStorm feels fine. December sees *Gen^{13} #25*, featuring a team roster shakeup. And that might not be all: Insiders say it might be the last J. Scott Campbell issue, leading up to the launch of a new Campbell title. Yeow!
- **More Spawn!** Word is that McFarlane Productions is planning a new slew of Spawn comics and merchandise for "Spawn Month, Vol. 2" in August to coincide with the movie premiere.
- **Jim Lee Reborn!** A source has let slip that an all-new Jim Lee-created title is slated for an August release from WildStorm. Beyond that, they ain't talkin'!
- **Access is Back!** It's Marvel's turn to publish the next DC/Marvel *All Access* crossover mini-series. Buzz tells us its happening in the fall, but format and creative teams are yet to be determined.
- **Joe Jusko Comics!** We've heard rumblings of an all-painted Joe Jusko "Future Ash" comic coming early in 1998.

OPERATION

ZERO TOLERANCE

TARGET: 55.0 YARDS

scan: X-MEN»

FOR THE SAKE OF ALL HUMANITY, THE X-MEN'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED. THIS JUNE, THEIR NUMBER'S UP

IN THE PAGES OF X-MEN, UNCANNY X-MEN, WOLVERINE & CABLE.

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Batman and Spidey Reunite

Spider-Man and **Batman** swing into action together for a second time in September.

Batman/Spider-Man, a one-shot following up 1995's *Spider-Man/Batman*, will feature a 48-page story by *Spectacular Spider-Man* writer **J. M. DeMatteis** and *Detective Comics* penciler **Graham Nolan**. In this go-around, the two heroes team up to match wits against the combined menace of **Ra's al Ghul** and the **Kingpin**.

"Both Ra's and Kingpin are brilliant, maniacal and don't play well with others," said Scott Peterson, editor for the crossover and *Detective Comics*. "And they both think on a large, global scale. This should make for a great story."

The story spans from Gotham City to Marvel's New York. "New York is integral to Spider-Man, while Gotham City is as much a supporting character to Batman as Commissioner Gordon," said Peterson. "It's going to be interesting to take each of them out of their element and see how that affects them."

Contrasts play a big part in the story, according to Peterson. "Spider-Man is fun, he's light. Batman is very grim, gritty and nighttime. They are very much opposites, and watching them try to work together despite their differences will make for a cool story.

"Batman and Spider-Man are arguably the greatest heroes in their respective universes. And it's always fun to see the champions of DC and Marvel come together." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Batman and Spider-Man team up again to face off against Ra's Al Ghul and Kingpin

Something's Fishy...

The "Star Wars" movie trilogy and DC Comics' *JLA* are currently two very hot topics. But many fans are unaware that "Star Wars" golden boy Luke Skywalker and JLA underwater specialist Aquaman have a lot in common. For you folks outta the loop, *Wizard* decided to break down the bizarre similarities between the two heroes. ■ *A. Kardon and B. Cunningham*

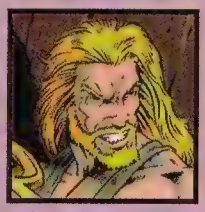

Photo courtesy of Lucasfilm Ltd.

AQUAMAN	LUKE SKYWALKER
Before fulfilling his destiny as a great hero, he's a li'l sissy blonde-haired kid who whines to no end.	Before fulfilling his destiny as a great hero, he's a li'l sissy blonde-haired kid who whines to no end.
Has impressive mental powers.	Has impressive mental powers.
Learns his dad is some sorta really powerful wizard guy.	Learns his dad is some sorta really powerful Jedi guy.
Fights his father to halt daddy's evil ways.	Fights his father to halt daddy's evil ways.
Loses a hand in battle.	Loses a hand in battle.
His arch-nemesis, Black Manta, used to wear a big black helmet.	His arch-nemesis (You-Know-Who) wears a big black helmet.
When last seen, he was rebuilding Atlantis.	When last seen, he was rebuilding the order of the Jedi.
Locks lips with a scantily clad chick who really digs him.	Locks lips with a sometimes scantily clad sister who really digs him.

'Marvel Team-Up' Swings Again

"I get the chance to screw with the entire Marvel Universe through the prism of Spidey's personality," said ecstatic writer **Tom Peyer**. "It's great! You know that's fun."

Peyer is helming ***Marvel Team-Up***, a revival title debuting in July that pairs Spidey with a different co-star every issue. This new monthly *Marvel Team-Up* will replace the existing quarterly *Spider-Man Team-Up*, and hearkens back to the old '70s-'80s *Marvel Team-Up* title in tone and in mission. "Marvel wants to make it fun, make it monthly and give a consistent creative team," Peyer said. Peyer and **Pat Olliffe**, current penciler on *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, will handle creative chores.

The feel of the title will be upbeat. "You can't do Spider-Man without a light element," Peyer said. "He's such a wise guy. Teaming someone with Spidey is like teaming them with Bugs Bunny. There's always something wild going on." Peyer will get his chance to pair Spidey with characters he feels will make for great situations. **Generation X** is featured in #1, with **Hercules** and **Quicksilver** making appearances in following issues. "I love pairing Spidey with real arrogant guys like Quicksilver or Herc," said Peyer. "Spidey can really play off guys like that and undermine them with his wit."

Each *Marvel Team-Up* issue will be self-contained, but there will be an underlying subplot to the first six issues. "I don't want to say much about it," Peyer adds, "but someone finds out how to screw up Spidey's spider-sense. And he's got a really twisted reason for doing it." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

CORRECTION

Oops! We goofed. Three times, no less.

In the "Letter Art" section of *Wizard* #69, we forgot to run the Grand Prize artwork by Sergio Aragonés (featuring Groo). Sorry, Sergio!

Also, in the Andy Kubert Q&A from *Wizard* #68, and the "Beastie Boys" feature from *Wizard* #69, we neglected to include any photo credits. Craig Blankenhorn took those swell photos of Andy Kubert, and Albert Ortega was responsible for that nifty Mark Waid photo. Our sincerest apologies for this oversight.

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...takes off June 11th.
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'TV STAR' TICK RETURNS TO COMICS

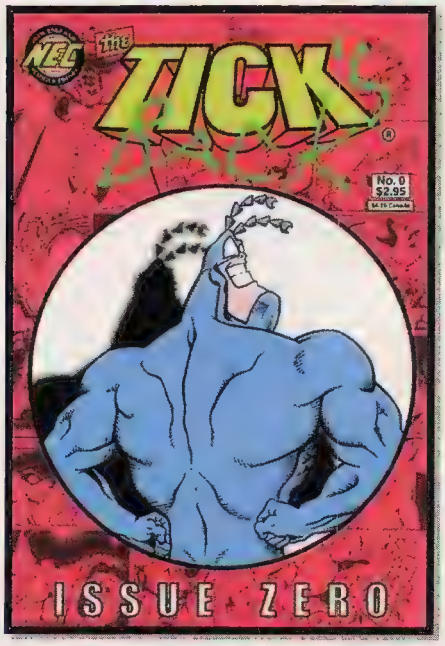
Once, he was just a "cult" comic character. Then he became a TV star. Now, the Tick is returning to his roots.

New England Comics, home of **Ben Edlund**'s original *The Tick* comics, launches a new ongoing series entitled ***The Tick: Slave to Fate*** in August. The series will feature original stories with no ties to "The Tick" animated series currently showing on Comedy Central.

Prior to the release of the new ongoing series, New England Comics will publish ***The Tick's Back*** #0, a one-shot that will introduce Ben Edlund's hand-picked Tick writer/artist successor, Eli Stone. "Ben's busy working on the TV stuff, and New England was looking for someone who had the wackiness to take over Ben's big blue baby," said Stone. "I guess they saw a sense of humor in me."

The Tick: Slave to Fate will construct a universe similar to the previous *Tick* comic series, but remain a separate entity from the animated show. "I have to be careful what [to use] and what not to use because there's some legal stuff to work around with the TV show," said Stone. "But I can use Arthur and any characters that were in the original comic." Characters like **Chairface Chippendale** and **Die Fledermaus** are fair game for the new writer.

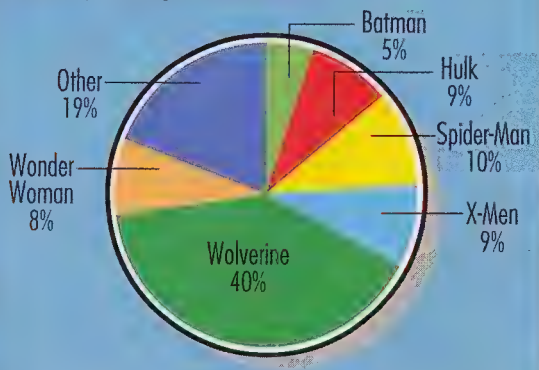
Stone promises the same wacky humor as Edlund's rendition of *The Tick*. The first issue sees the Tick, who's known for ruining everything he comes into contact with, going to an art museum. "Because of the eventual damaged art property in issue #1, the following issues will center on the pursuit of money," said Stone. "And super-bad lawyers are going to try and foreclose on Arthur's expensive suit, which was bought at an auction." ■ *Matthew Senreich*



Question of the Month

With all the recent character revamps like Marvel's "**Heroes Reborn**" and a rumored line of DC Comics revamps in the works (see "Buzz Box"), we thought we'd ask readers through our "Wizard World" forum on America Online what big-gun character they'd most like to see revamped from scratch...

Which of the following characters would you like to see completely revamped from scratch?



Seems fans are a bit frustrated with the current state of **Wolverine**, who "has lost his appeal of being a really cool bad-ass," according to one fan. Another fan said that without his adamantium, "he's barely recognizable both in how he looks and how he acts."

This month's poll generated an unusual number of write-in ballots, with write-ins ranging from **Magneto** to **Green Lantern**. The biggest write-in was the **X-Men**, which garnered nine percent of the total vote! "I think that Marvel keeps moving farther and farther away from what the X-Men used to be," said one respondent. "They're so dark and grim now. With so many quick and meaningless plotlines going on, and with so many characters acting out of character, I can't follow the books any more, nor do I think I want to." ■ *Sorrell Booke*

Comic Writer Yale Passes Away

Kim Yale, a writer who worked on numerous comic titles including ***Grimjack***, ***Suicide Squad*** and ***Manhunter***, died on March 7, 1997, a victim of breast cancer she had been diagnosed with a year earlier. She was 43 years old. Yale continued writing throughout her illness, most notably as a columnist for *Comics Buyer's Guide* and by collaborating with her husband, **John Ostrander**, on "Oracle: Year One," a critically acclaimed story in *The Batman Chronicles* #5.

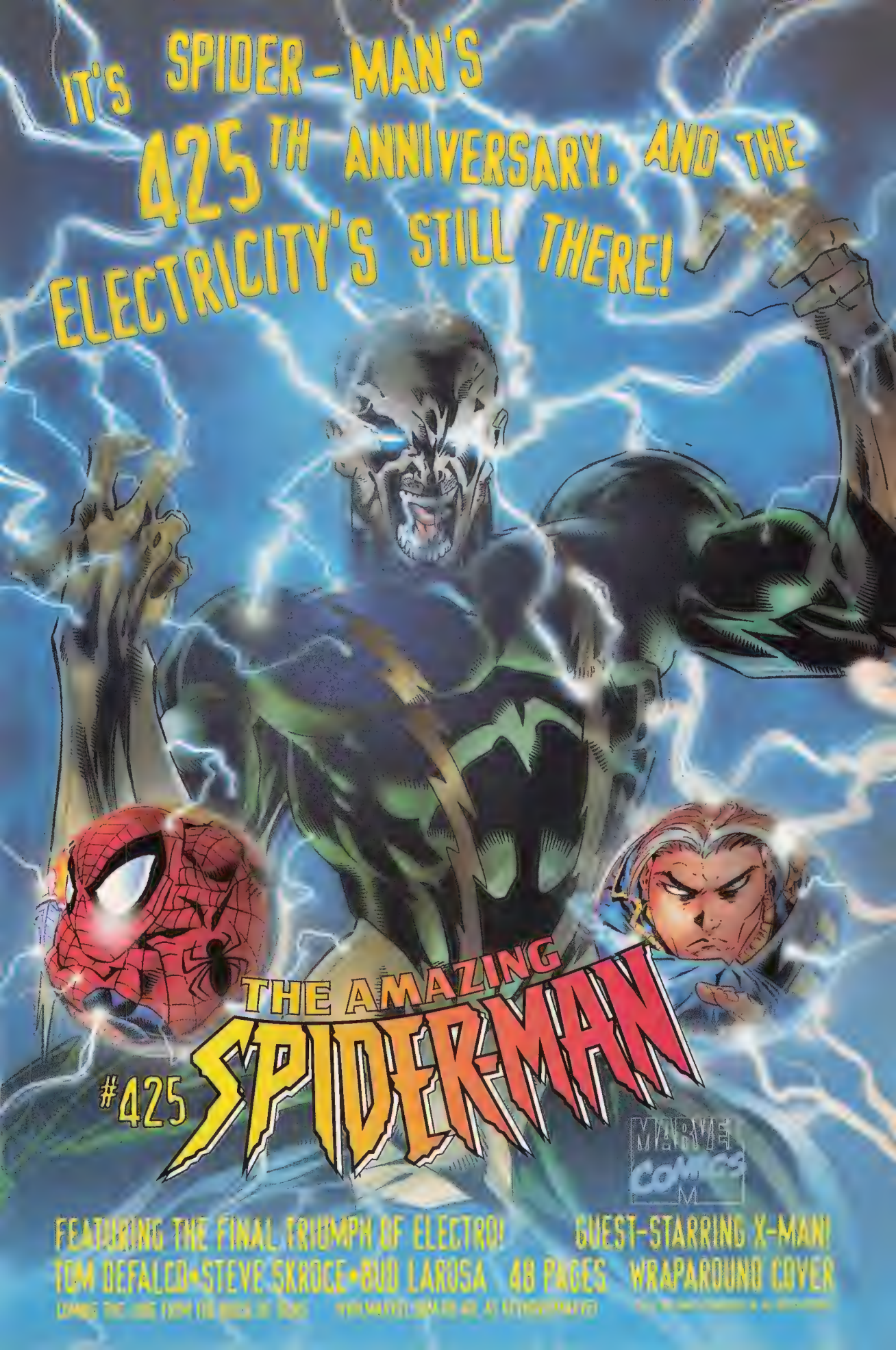
Yale also served a stint on DC Comics' editorial staff in the 1980s, assisting with the Dungeons & Dragons and Star Trek lines. A board member of the Friends of Lulu, Yale also taught at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art. ■ *Ruth Morrison*

'Wizard' Scavenger Hunt Winner Announced

The hunt paid off for Ron Kamrowski of Florida, N.Y. Ron was the Grand Prize Winner in the 1996 ***Wizard* Scavenger Hunt**, walking off with 20 comic art originals as his prize. "I went to garage sales, comic shows, everywhere to get some of the items," said Kamrowski. "Most items were easy, but that Viewmaster disc took a while."

Kamrowski completed a 70-item scavenger hunt and correctly answered five trivia questions to get a perfect score qualifying him to win. One random drawing among all perfect scores and, ta-da, Kamrowski was the winner. The Grand Prize included works from **Joe Madureira** (who drew Spider-Man), Steven Hughes/Jason Jensen (Lady Death), Jim Balent (Catwoman) and Joseph Michael Linsner (Dawn).

So which was Kamrowski's favorite? "I love the colors in the Lady Death piece, but just for the grace of it, I think I like the Catwoman the best." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*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'Major Bummer' Debuts as World's Laziest Superhero

DC Comics has a new superhero on the horizon and he's a lot like you. That is, if you're more interested in TV than in saving the world.

"***Major Bummer*** is the sad, true story of what would happen if we got superpowers," said DC Executive Editor **Mike Carlin**.

Major Bummer is also a new comedy/action/satire ongoing series debuting in June. It will be brought to you by writer **John Arcudi** and penciler **Doug Mahnke**, the team noted for its own special brand of craziness on ***The Mask*** from Dark Horse Comics. The story revolves around Lou Martin, a man Arcudi described as "a 19 year old who wakes up immensely strong and incredibly intelligent after getting zapped by a bizarre alien package he received in the mail. Problem is, he's such a lazy guy, powers really don't make a difference to him."

That presents a problem when other strange superheroes turn up on Martin's doorstep and adopt him as their leader. Will Martin take up leadership and become Major Bummer, Champion of Justice? "Nah," said Arcudi. In terms of power, Martin is "basically Superman. But he's Superman without a cause. He's super, but I don't know if you can call him a hero. He could solve the world's problems, but he's more interested in getting free cable. *Major Bummer* is the title, but it's not really a name for him. No one's going to call him that."

Major Bummer **is "the sad, true story of what would happen if we got superpowers"**

Martin will be forced to get heroic, however, when things like alien invasions and giant worm infestations hit his town, and he'll be forced to defend it. Why him? Only because there's no one else around. "Technically, we're part of the DC Universe," Arcudi said. "But the book functions best outside the DCU. We're more super comedy than superhero, so the book is set in the real world. And to me, that is comedy." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Pérez Kills Comic Fans

George Pérez kills real fans in deadly *Crimson Plague*

Artist **George Pérez** is planning to kill comic fans!

Pérez, famed for his work on ***Avengers*** and ***Teen Titans***, will launch a six-issue, creator-owned mini-series through **Event Comics** in June entitled ***Crimson Plague***. The bimonthly book will present fans with the opportunity to die in an actual comic book. "I'm trying to get the fans actively involved with *Crimson Plague*," said Pérez. "What better way than to make them stars in the book? Every character that has a name and a speaking part is a real person."

Crimson Plague is a futuristic story that features a genetically engineered woman named DiNA Simmons. DiNA is cursed, through a bizarre birth, with a deadly virus called Crimson Plague. The story revolves around DiNA's attempt to reach Earth for a cure. "However, what makes it Crimson Plague—as diplomatically as possible—is at that time of month, the plague becomes airborne and devastates an entire planet's population," explained Pérez. "DiNA's cycle is unpredictable, though, so as she tries to reach Earth, Earth will try to stop her from getting there."

Pérez has been developing *Crimson Plague* for two years now. When Event Comics got word of Pérez's plans for a creator-owned project, the company didn't hesitate to bring him in. "I think after George talked with us, it wasn't a matter of money," said Joe Quesada, co-publisher of Event Comics. "It was a matter of comfort level, and we pride ourselves on our personal relationships with creators."

"People have been asking me to do a creator-owned project for many years now," said Pérez. "And I found the right idea, time and place to do such a project." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

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HERCULES
AND THE HEART OF CHAOS
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Chan Kicks into Comics

Jackie Chan is fighting his way into his own **Topps Comics** series in May. The world-renowned martial artist and star of "Rumble in the Bronx" and "Supercop," now stars in *Jackie Chan: Spartan X*.

This six-issue, monthly mini-series starts in May, written and illustrated by comic legend **Michael Golden** (*The Nam*, *Punisher*). "Renee Witterstaetter is a good friend of mine," said Jackie Chan of Topps' editor on the project. "When she first mentioned the idea of publishing my own comic book, I was delighted and thought it'd be kind of fun."

"Jackie comes across bigger-than-life on screen," said Witterstaetter. "That quality translates well onto a comic book page. And Michael's artwork reflects the feeling so well. This all seems so right."

Jackie Chan: Spartan X will indirectly tie into Chan's newest American movie release, "Operation Condor," set for the fall. According to Witterstaetter, the comic book shows Jackie as a mercenary trying to solve an "X-Files"-type mystery, similar to what he will be doing in "Operation Condor." "He's a skeptic and doesn't believe in the supernatural until he is so confronted by it that he cannot deny something weird's going on."

"Something weird" should be well portrayed by Golden, a big Chan fan. "Jackie Chan is a Hong Kong Disneyworld," said Golden. "You pay for your ticket, and he takes you on a ride for an hour and a half." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Photo courtesy of Topps Comics

Chan (left), Witterstaetter and artist Michael Golden bring *Spartan X* to life

Helix Soars This Summer

The computer-generated *Dome* by Gibbons and McKie headlines Helix's '97 launches

Helix, the DC Comics sci-fi imprint that launched last summer, is getting ready to blast off again with a number of new titles starting in July.

Transmetropolitan, an ongoing series by **Warren Ellis** and **Darick Robertson**, tells the tale of a bizarre journalist named Spider Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been living a hermit's life in the mountains for years, but can only find inspiration to write when he's in the city known simply as "The City." Jerusalem needs to write two books, so he heads back to the city and readers view "The City" through Jerusalem's cracked view. **Geof Darrow** (*Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot*) will supply covers.

The assassin Bloody Mary created by **Garth Ennis** and **Carlos Ezquerra** returns in ***Bloody Mary: Lady Liberty***, a four-issue run from the self-same creative team beginning in July. "A religious madman has seized control of Manhattan and is going to murder 144,000 children to populate the kingdom of heaven," said Helix Editor Stuart Moore. "And Mary is called in to bring him down."

Dave Gibbons and **Angus McKie** contribute the one-shot ***The Dome: Ground Zero***, scheduled for later in the fall. "It's going to be about 95 percent computer-generated," said Moore. "Angus wants to use modeling and drawing software to create really big-scale visuals like you'd see in a blockbuster action movie."

Still unscheduled is the 12-issue ***Michael Moorcock's Multiverse*** and, "Yes, he's really writing it," laughed Moore. "It'll involve a lot of Moorcock's eternal champion characters, notably **Elric**. The story starts out as a dimension-spanning tale and divides into three storylines, with a different regular artist for each story." Those artists include **Walt Simonson**, British illustrator Mark Reeve and John Ridgeway. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

company updates

ABSTRACT STUDIO

Reprints of *Strangers in Paradise* issues will be made available monthly starting in May. The original 17 Antarctic Press and Abstract Studio issues will be reprinted over a 17-month period. Reprints can be distinguished from originals by a gold cover logo.

ANTARCTIC PRESS

The Crimson Nun, a four issue mini series spin-off of Antarctic's *Warrior Nun Areala* hits in May in a pulp action/adventure format with a $2.95 cover.

ARCHIE COMICS

Here's a look at the special computer-animated cover to *Sonic the Hedgehog #50*, which ties up the major "Endgame" story arc in June.

BIG ENTERTAINMENT

BIG's first two illustrated novels, combining sci-fi prose with fully painted illustrations by well-known artists, will be released in July. *Margaret Weis' Testament of the Dragon* features three stories set in different times, based on best-selling fantasy author Weis' dark fantasy epic starring Sir Justinian, a man pledged to serve a dragon in exchange for immortality. It's by writer Jeff Grubb, artists Steve Lieber, Rags Morales and others, and features a cover by Morales and Angus McKie. Writer Steven Grant and artists Mark Jackson, Pablo Marcos and Morales present a group of new high-tech stories based on Isaac Asimov's final robot story in *Isaac Asimov's I•ROBOTS: The History of I•ROBOTS*. The cover's by Marc Sasso.

CARTOON BOOKS

Jeff Smith apologizes for the delay of *Bone #27*, which was caused by Smith's recent eye surgery. However, *Bone* is back on track and issue #29 makes its way to stores in May.

CHAOS! COMICS

July sees the Chaos! CD soundtrack for the *Purgatori: The Vampire's Myth* mini-series. Says Chaos! Publisher Brian Pulido, the CD is "full of techno-goth-ethnic instrumentals that you can actually follow panel to panel." The *Evil Ernie: Destroyer* mini series has been pushed back to a fall '97 release.

CLAYPOOL COMICS

Kurt Busiek (*Astro City*) lends his writing talent to *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark #50*, shipping in June. The book features Elvira bouncing around a comic convention.

COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

The CBLDF has recently teamed up with the ACLU and brought in an additional lawyer to take artist Michael Diana's case to the Supreme Court.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT

The success of Crusade Japan (Crusade's international partnership with Japan's Horihachi Toys) has caused the company to move *Angel Fire #1*'s release month from March to June. However, an *Angel Fire* novelization is in the works.

DARK HORSE COMICS

The Mask: Virtual Sanity is a one shot where the Mask enters virtual reality and faces a number of different threats crafted by a variety of creators including Mike Mignola, Sergio Aragonés and more. *Nexus: Nightmare in Blue* features six criminals that Nexus can kill, but he can't decide which one to off. So you, the reader, get to decide through a ballot in issue #1. This four-issue mini-series begins in July. *Frank Miller's Tales to Offend* is a spooky one-shot collecting three hard-to-find stories: two Lance Blastoff tales from *Dark Horse Presents* and "Daddy's Little Girl," from *Decade of Dark Horse*. The book ships in July for $2.95. July sees the start of Sergio Aragonés' six-issue *Louder than Words*. The series features one- and two-page humor strips without dialogue.

DC COMICS

EliseWorlds' Finest? You bet. John Byrne is slated to do a projected four-issue series tentatively titled "Generations." Says Byrne, the series will span each hero's

continued on page 77

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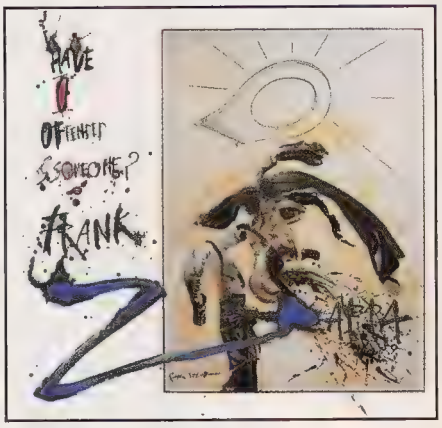

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MASS DESTRUCTION

continued from page 25

incarnations throughout different eras ranging from their violent days of 1939 to the campy '50s up to the grimmer modern times. It's currently unscheduled....Leonard Kirk becomes the new regular artist on *Supergirl* with #13....All DC Milestone Media comics cease publication in May.

HARRIS COMICS

Vampirella teams up with WildStorm Productions' WetWorks in a one-shot crossover this June. The crossover comes with a $2.95 price, is written by Steven Grant (*Grifter*), drawn by Sean Show (*Penthouse Comix*) and sports a cover by Michael Bair.

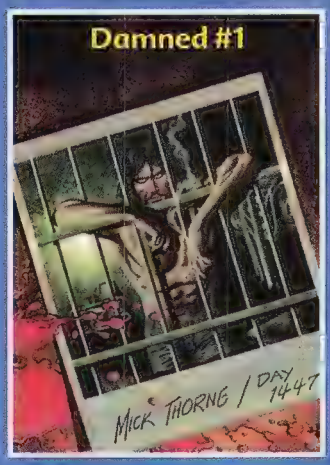
IMAGE COMICS

• HIGHBROW ENTERTAINMENT

The Savage Dragon time travels to appear in *Big Bang Comics* #12 in June.

• HOMAGE COMICS

Steven Grant and Mike Zeck's new series *Damned*, the story of ex-con Mick Thorne trying to go straight, begins in June as a four-issue mini-series and will continue as a series of mini-series.



• TOP COW COMICS

Garth Ennis takes a *The Darkness* sabbatical after #6. He will return as regular series writer with #11....June's *Witchblade* #15 is the lead-in to Top Cow's Witchblade/Darkness crossover for fall of '97.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

Nick Fury, Grifter and Jean Grey meet up in June in *WildC.A.T.s/X-Men: The Silver Age* by Scott Lobdell, Jim Lee and Scott Williams....*Gen*^{13} *Bootleg* #8-#10 features a story by manga guy Adam Warren. In it, the whole Gen^{13} gang gets to make a martial arts film...Remember that funky *Gen*^{13} *Zine* put together by Sarah Becker? Well, Ms. Becker is now working on June's *Gen*^{13} *College Yearbook!* The best part? Fans can send in photos to appear in the issue! Check out the latest issue of *Gen*^{13} for full details....Gen^{13}'s mentor Lynch gets his own one-shot this June in an Indiana Jones-type adventure set in Brazil in 1968.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

June sees the release of the four-part *The Crow: Demon in Disguise* mini-series. In it, goth rocker Dreux Dumaine bumps into a powerful Voodoo master, dies a mysterious death and is brought back to get revenge on his killer. This 32-page black-and-white series retails for $2.95.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS

London Night's '97 tour kicks off with April's Pittsburgh Comicon, and will feature several LNS creators, including Everette Hartsoe, David Quinn and Steve Sandoval, along with Heather Elizabeth Parkhurst (the Tommi Gunn model), and tentatively Carmen Electra (inspiration for Embrace, and MTV's new "Singled Out" co-host). It goes through June's Dragon*Con in Atlanta and the Chicago Comicon and San Diego Comic Con in July....June's *Embrace: Hunger of the Flesh* #1 brings back LNS' vampire heroine and teams writer David Quinn with new artist Scott Fanetti.

LOST CAUSE PRODUCTIONS

With the "Star Wars" bonanza in full gear, May sees Lost Cause's spoof *Spandex Tights Presents: Space Opera Part 1* by Bryan J. L. Glass (*Ship of Fools*).

MARVEL COMICS

July sees the release of a new *Gambit* limited series....Gambit fans will also want to check out *What If?* #100, starring Rogue and Gambit....A *Daredevil/Deadpool* one-shot by Joe Kelley and Bernard Chang is in the works for July.

MAXIMUM PRESS

Supreme hits #50 in July. Look for a double-sized issue and a bevy of guest artists. A limited-edition (1,000 pieces) Alan Moore-autographed variant will also be available.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT

Armageddonquest is a massive 900-page graphic novel shipping in three 300-page volumes. The first one hits in May with a $13 cover price.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS

The first new Milk and Cheese issue in two years, *Milk and Cheese's Latest Thing*, hits stores in July.

SOLOGRAPHICS

Hawaii's own superhero, Pineapple Man, teams up with Luk Fun, a Chinese mercenary, in May's *Pineapple Man* #2.

TOPPS COMICS

Topps hits with a *Xena: Warrior Princess* two-issue series in fall based on the popular TV series. The cover for #1 will be by famed "good girl" artist Dave Stevens, while issue #2's cover will be by the *Gen*^{13} team of J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner.

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PlayStation

Doran in Japan: A Small Press Tour

[EDITOR'S NOTE: American comic writer/artist Colleen Doran (*A Distant Soil*) recently returned from a comic tour of Japan. Here's the skinny on what she found out...]

There's a lot to learn about comics in Japan. I was lucky enough to learn a lesson or two when Tezuka Productions invited me to Tokyo as part of its annual cultural exchange. Once a year, every year, the company invites American cartoonists to meet their Japanese counterparts.

Tezuka Productions is named for Osamu Tezuka (1926-1989), revered in Japan as "The God of Comics." Osamu created hundreds of comic and animation characters, the best-known in the U.S. being Astro Boy. For 1996, a load of American creators including Jeff Smith (*Bone*), Fred Schodt (author of *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*) and myself were among the guests. My mom and manager, Anita Doran, also got to come along. Here's how things went:

Photo: Anita Doran

Colleen (with Masharu Omodaka of Tezuka Productions), and guests are a hit with Japanese paparazzi

November 15: You know it's going to be a good trip when you're immediately offered champagne as you get on the plane. Too bad I don't drink.

November 16: Tokyo! Reality check #1: Being a cartoonist in Japan is *really cool!* Customs officials ask us the usual questions about our trip ("Business or pleasure?"), and their eyes bug out when I tell them I'm with Tezuka Productions. Lots of things are different for comic artists here than they are in America. Some top artists are treated like American rock stars. They're followed practically everywhere by paparazzi photographers and mobs of screaming kids.

Reality check #2: Japanese men are kinda petite. Brawny American women should expect to heft their own luggage. Our porter hurt himself trying to lift my bag.

We have dinner with the president of Tezuka Productions, Mr. Takayuki Matsutani, as well as Masahiro Katayama, president of the Japan Cartoonists Association. The Americans all order sushi. The Japanese order steak.

November 17: We tool around Tokyo in a fleet of limousines and visit Kodansha, publisher of *Akira* and *The Legend of Mother Sarah*. We are told of the astonishing sales figures for Japanese comics. Some weeklies can reach sales of five or six million copies each. And, yes, those are *weeklies*!

That evening, it's discussion and dinner with publishers and editors from Japan's leading publishers. The Japanese occasionally reveal themselves to be as ignorant of American comics as we are of Japanese comics. They think *Bone* and *A Distant Soil* are typical American superhero books. Yeah, right...

Photo: Tezuka Productions

Sushi, anyone? (From left) Vijaya Iyer, Jeff Smith, Anita Doran, Jules Pfeiffer and Colleen

November 18: We attend a formal symposium, a *big* deal with extensive newspaper and television coverage. Important tip: American put-down humor doesn't fly well in Japan. Jeff Smith spouts a zinger about editors, which is greeted with stony silence.

At the symposium, a Japanese cartoonist characterizes Americans as lazy complainers. The Japanese are

rather proud of their impressive sales and the ability of their artists to produce hundreds of pages a month.

Well, there's quantity and then there's quality. While many Japanese comics are excellent, many others look like they were drawn while in the grip of an epileptic seizure. Japanese creators also have huge staffs of assistants, usually no less than five (one artist has 26 assistants, including seven ghost writers), who are not credited for their work. However, the Japanese do crank out a lot of work. There are many stories of artists dropping dead from overwork at age 30 or 40. We are informed that the average life expectancy of a Japanese cartoonist is only 60!

November 19: We fly to Takarazuka, Tezuka's boyhood home. As we visit the Osamu Tezuka Museum (Yes! He's got a museum!), we're greeted by paparazzi who follow us everywhere. The museum is wonderful. We cancel our other plans and stay all day. It's fabulous and boasts a theater, a complete computer-access Tezuka video library, print library, galleries and a detailed "time capsule" display of Tezuka's life and work. We especially enjoy the animation studio where kids (like us!) can draw a few frames and have them computer scanned on screen into instant mini-films.

Photo: Tezuka Productions

The animation exhibit at the Tezuka Museum

November 20: A day in Kyoto visiting temples and gardens. We take the bullet train back to Tokyo and all fall asleep.

November 21: Fujio Fujiko—artist of *Doraeman*, *The Laughing Salesman* and *The Way of Manga*, as well as one of Japan's most prestigious artists—invites us to lunch. It's a fabulous opportunity to speak with this esteemed, gracious gentleman.

November 22: Wind-down time. Most of the group heads back to America. Mum goes shopping and I have dinner with Junco Ito, producer and agent for Buichi Terasawa, the artist of *Cobra*. Fun stuff.

November 23: Lunch with romance cartoonist Tomoco Tanaguchi. I get an earful of stories about Japanese cartoonists whose assistants do all the work and get none of the credit. Later, I head back to meet Junco for a tour of Buichi Terasawa's studio, but I become so lost in a huge train station, I never make it!

November 24: Shopping at comic stores. Comic specialty shops are actually scarce in Japan, since comics are so common in grocery stores, bookstores and even vending machines. Mom and I (finally!) have dinner with Junco Ito again and get more scoop on the Japanese comic industry.

Photo: Doran

A comic book vending machine!

November 25: Time to head back! The Tezuka Productions people say goodbye and it's home on another comfy flight. We get Godiva chocolates, but I drop one and it falls into my seat while I'm sleeping. When we arrive in New York, I wake up with a big brown stain on my butt. Lovely. W

Colleen Doran is the creator of A Distant Soil, *published by Image Comics. And to her, Japan is quite distant! And made of soil! See the irony? Ah, never mind.*

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GETTING RID OF HAL JORDAN BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO 'GREEN LANTERN'

BY PAUL M. ANDERSON

YOU'D THINK HE GOT RID OF *MICHAEL* JORDAN.

"I was online recently," *Green Lantern* editor Kevin Dooley says, "and this kid said to me, 'What you did to Hal Jordan was horrible and I can only hope what happened to Hal will happen to you.' And I said, 'Oh, you mean I gain more popularity, become a more well-rounded character and then sacrifice my life to save the universe?' And he said, 'No, I just wish you would die.' "

Sheesh. It's not like Dooley published a comic book version of Jeffrey Dahmer's cookbook. But the DC Comics editor's decision to have Green Lantern (a.k.a. a gray-templed Jordan) go insane, try to destroy the universe, and be replaced with a hip, twentysomething slacker did ruffle a lot of fans' feathers.

Oh, and did we mention Dooley's move catapulted *Green Lantern* to the upper echelon of DC's books? According to Dooley, the book's sales skyrocketed 300 percent since Ron Marz took over the writing chores with *Green Lantern* #48.

It's been more than three years since Kyle Rayner took over for Jordan in *Green Lantern* #50, and some fans are still stewing over Jordan's forced retirement. And when DC finally killed off Jordan in last year's *Final Night* crossover series, classic GL fans took it as another slap in the face.

MAJOR MAKE-OVERS always generate controversy, but the attention doesn't always translate into higher sales (just ask the Spider-Man editors who unsuccessfully replaced Peter Parker with a clone). So how did DC manage to take a beloved Silver Age superhero, replace him with a complete novice and score a big hit?

From appearances, not too carefully. In just the space of a three-issue story arc, *Green Lantern* #48-#50's "Emerald Twilight," Jordan turned rogue and the ring was randomly plopped into Rayner's hand.

The title's sales had slumped so much that DC's powers that be demanded a major change and told Dooley, "The sky's the limit." Though Dooley wouldn't elaborate on his initial plans, he says they were actually rejected because they were considered too tame.

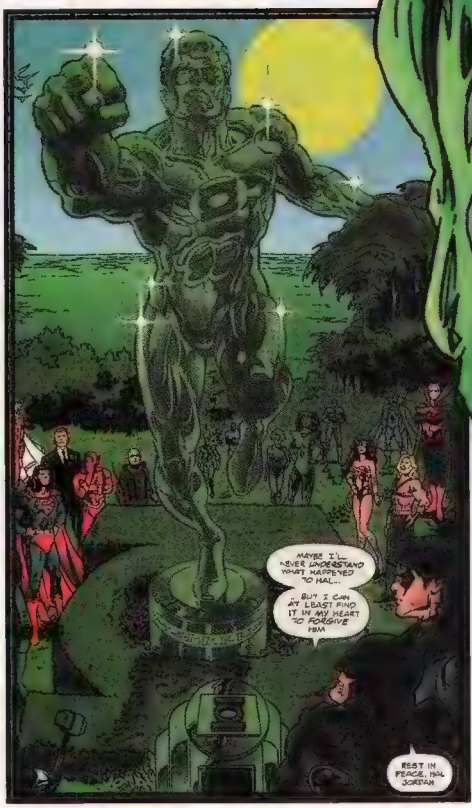
Enter Marz.

"Dooley called me late one night and said, 'Do you want to do this?' I thought, 'Wow, Green Lantern. Cool,' "Marz says. "And then the other shoe dropped. 'Oh, by the way, we're going to get rid of Hal and your responsibility is to come up with somebody else.' "

Marz, an up-and-coming writer at the time, was certainly hesitant about getting involved with such a major change.

"I felt flattered they offered me the book and I was quite interested," Marz says, "but I didn't give them an answer right away. A week went by before I was solid on the book."

Rookie penciler Darryl Banks, com-



As the new Green Lantern, Kyle Rayner (opposite) eventually won fans over, despite the criticism over the treatment of former GL, Hal Jordan (above)

Kyle Rayner was in the right place at the right time to receive the most powerful weapon in the universe

ing on board with the first part of "Emerald Twilight," was equally uneasy about redesigning Green Lantern.

"I had always wanted to [draw] *Green Lantern* for many years," Banks says. "As a kid, I even created rip-off Green Lantern characters. But when they said they were going to change things I thought, 'Aw, this is going to kill the book.' After a while, though, I started thinking if this does well, I'll be the guy who created the new vision of the Green Lantern."

THAT WAS A DUBIOUS DISTINCTION at first. DC was getting up to 200 letters a month when Rayner got the ring. Many fans screamed bloody murder when Jordan wiped out favorites like supporting character Kilowog and the evil Sinestro on his insane quest to amass enough power to resurrect Coast City, his hometown that was destroyed in *Green Lantern* #46. But it went beyond the mere deaths of two characters, as Jordan virtually wiped out the entire Green Lantern Corps. The Corps, made up of hundreds of Green Lanterns each in charge of protecting different sectors of the universe, had always been an important facet of the title. That all changed when Jordan stole the sole power source of all the Green Lanterns' rings, rendering the Corps powerless.

Marz concedes the change was rash, but argues it made sense considering the sudden destruction of Jordan's hometown. "In retrospect, I wish I had more issues to deal with Hal's descent into madness. We could have made it a lot more palatable and convincing to people. People would have been more accepting of [the change]," he says.

But Dooley wanted the emerald torch passed by issue #50.

It was one of those things where Jordan would go nuts after seeing Coast City obliterated. But in the issue following the Coast City disaster, Jordan teamed up with Green Arrow to save his buddy Pieface (a.k.a. Tom Kalmaku) in a rather routine adventure involving Hal's girlfriend Carol Ferris.

"[Coast City's destruction] didn't seem like such a wrenching experience," Marz says of the editorial *faux pas*. "He just went on and had a new adventure."

Dooley admits the Green Arrow team-up was awkward, given Coast City's obliteration the issue before. "Gerard Jones [Marz's predecessor] had already written that issue," Dooley says. "We had another direction planned, but when Ron Marz came on board, #47 was already done. [Unfortunately], the direction Gerard wanted to take the book [didn't mesh] with the way we wanted to go."

Simply replacing Jordan with Rayner wasn't enough, though. Dooley and Marz also did away with the ring's vulnerability to the color yellow as well as the Guardians of the Universe, an ancient race of aliens who created the Green Lantern Corps and administered the rings.

"The rings were such incredibly powerful devices the fact that there were 3,600 of them made everything ridiculous," Marz says. "You'd think 3,600 guys with the most powerful weapon in the universe could police everything." And now there's just Kyle Rayner, sole ring wielder and lone Green Lantern.

WHEN DOOLEY AND MARZ set about creating the new Green Lantern, they looked to the heyday of Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and John Romita Sr.'s run on Marvel Comics' Amazing Spider-Man in the 1960s and '70s. They wanted a Green Lantern fans could identify with.

The parallels between Spidey and Rayner are amazing, if not the least bit coincidental. Getting their powers amounted to being in the right place at the right time, both characters started out exceedingly cocky and their moment of truth came when a loved one died because of their new responsibility. In Spider-Man's case it was his Uncle Ben, and for Kyle it was his girlfriend Alex.

"It was very, very intentional to pick up on the classic Stan Lee, Spider-Man feel," Dooley says. "We just didn't expect this kind of bad reaction to what we did with Hal because we felt it was a good story that was character motivated."

Marz decided to have Ganthet, the last Guardian, hand Rayner the ring in an alleyway just because he was the first person he came across. "That made it all the more magical that this could happen to you," Dooley says.

"We wanted someone new and fresh and who wasn't already attached to the DC Universe," Marz adds. "I was going for the Everyman thrust into a crazy situation. We were very conscious of showing him experiencing each new thing each step along the way.

"We might have erred on the side of being too careful of his newness and self-doubt," Marz admits. "We initially made Kyle arrogant and cocky and designed him to rub people the wrong way to a certain extent. Then when his girlfriend gets killed, it's like a bucket of cold water over the whole thing. He starts to understand the seriousness of the situation and takes the path of being a hero."

Banks, meanwhile, has become mostly responsible for the way the new Green Lantern looks. He designed the new GL cos-

tume Rayner wears, as well as Jordan's redesigned costume. Banks even came up with Parallax, the name for Jordan's new incarnation.

"For Kyle, I wanted something with a little Japanese influence," Banks says. His inspiration for the new Green Lantern mask came from the '70s version of Marvel's *X-Men* character Sunfire.

As for Parallax, Banks "wanted a knight kind of thing," which explains Jordan's newfound armor-plating. But why go to all the trouble of revamping Hal Jordan when he was on the outs anyway? Why not just kill him?

"If we had just had him die, well, that was something that was done before," Dooley says, adding plans were already in the works at the time to kill Oliver Queen as Green Arrow. "We'd killed Superman and Barry Allen [the Flash], so it'd been done."

Besides, Marz liked the idea of Jordan as a Machiavellian hero along the lines of Magneto.

"I always felt that the really good villains have to have some kind of humanity or flaw the readers can empathize with," Marz says. "Magneto does really awful stuff, but he firmly believes in the righteousness of what he's doing and to a certain extent it's understandable."

AS FOR THE FUTURE of *Green Lantern*, Dooley advises readers to stay tuned. The risk-takers aren't done shaking up the status quo.

"In issue #90 we're going to deal with why Kyle was in that alleyway [where he got the ring]," Dooley says. "It's a very poignant story. It involves [Kyle's girlfriend] Donna Troy meeting Kyle's mom and friends, and has undertones dealing with youthful alcoholism as well."

Dooley is tightlipped on specifics for the far future, but he promises a blockbuster.

"We have a story for issue #100. Boy, do we have a story for issue #100," he says. "We are going to continue bucking the system because the system equals the status quo, and the status quo is boring. We beat the odds because we truly care about the character and Green Lantern as a concept.

"A lot of the fans who dropped Green Lantern said they came back and kept reading beacause they liked the stories. Now it's just a young guy with a power ring trying to do his best. And isn't that what we're all trying to do—our best?"

Paul M. Anderson secretly has a Green Lantern ring of his own. He only uses it to score with the babes, though.

Editor Dooley says *Green Lantern* will "continue bucking the system"

JUMP START

Seein' as how Ron Marz and Darryl Banks overcame some pretty stacked odds by successfully shaking up the entire world of Green Lantern, *Wizard* thought it'd be neat to see how they'd revamp five other cool DC characters in need of a facelift.

HAWKMAN:

Marz would return to the character's original concept as an archeologist "imbued with the power of the Hawk gods. He'd almost risk losing himself in the power of this ancient force."

Banks would leave Hawkman's costume alone, reintroduce Hawkman's sidekick bird from the '60s and lobby for Hawkwoman's return.

RED TORNADO:

"I like the idea of a cyborg or a machine trying to be a hero," Marz says. "Not trying to be a man, but beyond that—trying to be a hero. That's a timeless concept."

Banks would go to the movie "Twister" for visual inspiration. "Part of his body could be emanating winds," he says, "like mists with more of an elemental feel."

FIRESTORM:

"I'd bring back the duality of two minds trying to control this heroic being," Marz says. "I always like that concept of the stodgy scientist and the young kid trying to do something together."

Banks would keep the original costume, but draw the character as an "elemental fire being."

BLUE DEVIL:

"I'd basically make him into a guy who takes care of occult and supernatural instances," Marz says. "I'd make him a dark, spooky character and lose all of that happy-go-lucky baggage."

Banks disagrees and likes the "more fun, animated feel" of the character's original concept.

DR. FATE:

"In the first page of the first issue, I'd have some guy put a bullet in [current Fate, Jared Stevens'] head and bring in a psychic team to draw Fate out of Stevens. The gold helmet guys would be part of a dark government cabal who wanted to use Dr. Fate, but [the helmet] gets away from them. I'd have the helmet bounce around for a few issues, pass through a few hands until it falls into the hands of Dr. Fate's new identity."

"I'd give him a look close to the Amalgam Comics' Dr. Strangefate," Banks says. "The helmet's the main thing. I really like that helmet a lot. ■ *PA*

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UAL SUSPECTS

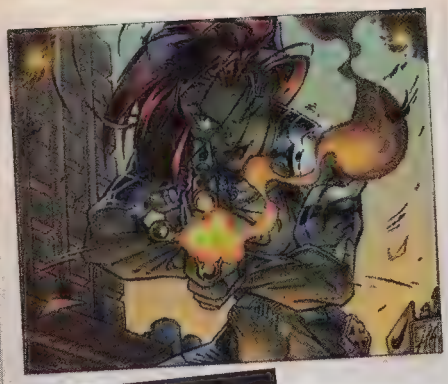
'WHO KILLED GRAYDON CREED?'

Police photo and inset by Bernard Chang

That's what we wanna know, and definitely what *you* wanna know. Ever since the front-running presidential candidate was reduced to ashes in *X-Factor* #130 last November, X-fans everywhere have been debating like crazy as to who the culprit is. And with good reason: Creed was on his way to the White House as his anti-mutant stance was extremely popular with the voting citizens of the Marvel Universe; his assassination has that voting public hot with anger, the masses believing Creed's death was at the hands of a deranged mutant.

Another interesting wrinkle: Creed's death isn't far off from what was prophesized in the classic "Days of Future Past" storyline (*Uncanny X-Men* #141-#142), where the death of a prominent anti-mutant political figure ignites a chain of events leading to a future ruled by the robotic, mutant-hunting Sentinels who either imprison Earth's mutants (and non-mutant superheroes) in concentration camps or exterminate them.

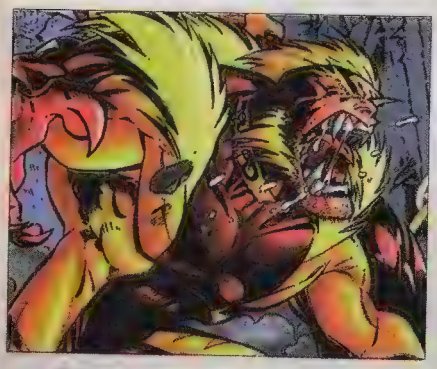
So Creed's death has major consequences. But who did it? And why? We've made the solution one step easier by listing 10 of our prime suspects in order of probability (lowest to highest) with an Agatha-Christie-like rundown on why they could've done the deed.



MYSTIQUE

SUSPECT: Mystique
MOTIVE: Graydon Creed is her son (fathered by Sabretooth) and it's a known fact she ain't too proud of him. In fact, Mystique sees him as a threat to mutantkind—reason enough to bump him off. And she believes Creed sent some goons from the Friends of Humanity to attack a young mutant boy she was training in the use of his powers (*X-Factor* #127). Let's not forget, too—as a member of X-Factor sent to protect Creed, she was at the scene of the crime.
ODDS: 25-1. Even though Mystique was at the murder scene, she tried to *save* Creed's life. And hey—she's not stupid. She sees Creed's death as a bigger threat than his potential presidency. She knew the relationship between mutants and humans would explode if Creed died a martyr.

SUSPECT: Sabretooth
MOTIVE: Geez, this guy kills people for the hell of it, never mind a pain-in-the-ass son. Sabretooth would see Creed's murder as the correction of a past mistake. And let's not forget, as a member of X-Factor, Sabretooth was also at the murder scene.
ODDS: 20-1. We all know Sabretooth had a restraining collar on. But let's get real: even if Sabretooth somehow devised a way to get the collar off, Graydon Creed would have been a big blood stain on the sidewalk instead of a pile of ash. A gun ain't Sabretooth's style. Besides, way back in *Sabretooth* #4, Sabretooth had Creed dead to rights, but said he wasn't worth killing. Why kill Creed now?



SABRETOOTH

SUSPECT: Mr. Sinister
MOTIVE: A master of genetic tinkering, Sinister's involvement might just be as simple as moving mutant evolution along. He sees the tension between the human (homo sapien) and mutant (homo superior) races rising on a global scale, and he might have seen Creed's death as an opportunity for mutants to reach their full potential. So far, Sinister hasn't wanted world conquest...but that doesn't mean he won't start now.
ODDS: 15-1. Though Sinister has gone the direct route before with the violent extermination of the Morlocks, this is hardly a move that suits his style. He's a lurk-in-the-shadows-type of manipulator who would never do something so public. Also, Sinister understands that Creed's death could well mean the destruction of mutantkind, bringing *him* down as well.

SUSPECT: Sebastian Shaw
MOTIVE: Shaw and his Inner Circle of the Hellfire Club have everything to gain from Creed's elimination. With the heightened anti-mutant hysteria, governments of the world will want to upgrade their protection against unruly mutants and that spells one word: Sentinels. Since Shaw's companies produce the mutant-hunters, he will gain wealth and power beyond his wildest imagination—not to mention influence on a global scale.
ODDS: 10-1. More Sentinels would certainly give Shaw the power he seeks, but ultimately, Sentinels mean the destruction of all mutants. Since Shaw and his Inner Circle cronies are all mutants, there's no guarantee they would not be discovered and killed just like the rest.

SUSPECT GROUP: The Upstarts
MOTIVE: Even though these killers haven't appeared together in over a year, it's not impossible to believe Creed's murder would be a triumphant comeback for them. These competitive killers run on a point system, where the one who gains a certain unnamed amount will win an unnamed "grand prize" given by the mysterious Gamesmaster, who manipulates these bozos to "win" points somehow. Even though Creed was an Upstart, The Gamesmaster might've grown tired of Creed and placed a price on his head, thus giving any one of the other Upstarts (Fenris, Shinobi Shaw, Trevor Fitzroy, Fabian Cortez and Siena Blaze) the edge in the contest for the prize. And what better way to gain an edge over your opponents than to eliminate a powerful competitor?
ODDS: 8-1. These kooks are crazy, but not *that* crazy. First of all, the remaining Upstarts are all mutants, and even they couldn't avoid a future full of Sentinels. Secondly, since Fitzroy is from the "Days of Future Past" timeline (albeit further in the future), he'd do anything in his power a) not to get stuck in that apocalypse, and b) to ensure his fellow competitors don't ignite that flame.

MR. SINISTER

SEBASTIAN SHAW

UPSTARTS

HAVOK

SUSPECT: Havok

MOTIVE: Havok is no longer the hero he once was. He and his Brotherhood group promise to avenge all the mutants being killed or living in fear. Let's look at the facts, shall we? Creed was killed with an energy-based blast that left him in ashes; Havok's power is energy-based. More than a week before Creed's death, Havok and the Brotherhood attacked a jet airliner and proclaimed mutants were finally going to take a stand for themselves; knocking off Creed would be quite the statement. Oh, and let's not forget that as a former X-Factor member, he would have a tactical advantage over Creed's protectors because he is well versed in their positioning and manuevers.

ODDS: 6-1. Havok's group is an admitted *reactive* group, not proactive. So far, Creed was all talk. Havok was certainly planning for the headache of Creed's inevitable election, but wouldn't do anything till Creed made a move.

SUSPECT: Apocalypse

MOTIVE: Apocalypse's Darwinian motto is "Only the strong survive." If Apocalypse wanted to start a war between man and mutant, this would be the perfect way to fan the fires and find out who would be left standing. Killing a prominent public figure and blaming it on a mutant is a no-brainer war strategy: only the most powerful mutants would survive and the human race would most likely be left in ruins. It would be a perfect scenario for someone like Apocalypse to come in and proclaim himself absolute ruler, eh?

ODDS: 5-1. Much like Sinister, Apocalypse would understand the repercussions of Creed's death. It's also an iffy prospect with no certain outcome. Plus, this is all too subtle for Apocalypse. Remember, this is a guy who, a few years ago, tried to start the apocalypse by destroying Manhattan. And it's also too long-term in scope—Apocalypse demands instant solutions.

SUSPECT: Graydon Creed

MOTIVE: What better way to further spark anti-mutant sentiment than to make a martyr out of yourself? By faking his own death, Creed probably will do a better job of mutant condemnation than he would if he actually became president.

APOCALYPSE

ODDS: 4-1. Hmm, sounds like the ends definitely justify the means. But why would the power-mad, egomaniacal Creed want to take himself out

cont'd →

Can you get?

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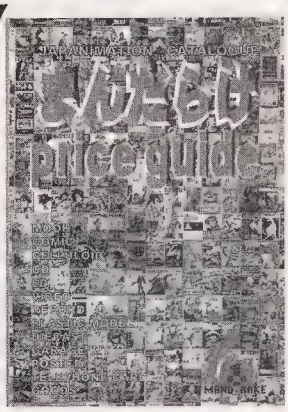

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He's Not Dead?!?

Now that we've gone through who *we* think killed Graydon Creed, we wanted to get the fans' take on the mystery. Since Creed's assassination in *X-Factor* #130, readers have been trying to determine who the culprit could be.

Using our Wizard World forum on America Online, we posted a poll listing 13 possible suspects and asked fans:

"Who Killed Graydon Creed?"

a) Bastion 20%
b) The Friends of Humanity 4%
c) Havok and the Brotherhood 14%
d) Iceman 2%
e) Jamie Maddrox, the Multiple Man 2%
f) Mr. Sinister 1%
g) Mystique 3%
h) Pyro 3%
i) Sabretooth 8%
j) Sebastian Shaw and the Hellfire Club 2%
k) Senator Robert Kelly 1%
l) The Upstarts 1%
m) Creed's not dead 37% ← !
n) Other 2%

"Graydon Creed faked his death to become a martyr to his cause," commented one fan. "[The] First rule of comics is if you don't see the body, he ain't dead."

Many fans seem to agree. "When was the last time Marvel killed someone and had them stay dead?" asked another fan.

But 63 percent of the fans believe Creed is dead and most pointed the finger at Bastion. "He probably offed Creed to further his goal of killing all mutants," said one fan. Other frontrunners were Havok ("Creed was killed by a plasma burst. Can we say...Havok?"), Sabretooth ("Sabretooth is a born killer and probably found a way out of that restraining collar to kill his son who's shamed him.") and the Friends of Humanity ("[illegible] the Friends of Humanity got word that Creed's parents were mutants, hunted him down and murdered him.").

Only time will tell. And ridging by the X-Men creators' tendency to [illegible] types of storylines out, [illegible] ■ Conrad [illegible]

of the spotlight? Sure, he'd become a behind-the-scenes player...but it would never sit with Creed that he couldn't get recognition for his ultimate triumph. Plus, he was merely a pawn of Bastion (as seen in *Uncanny X-Men* #334) and followed orders implicitly. He was probably a poor slob who was oblivious to the martyrdom awaiting him.

SUSPECT GROUP: The Friends of Humanity

MOTIVE: This group hates mutants and wants 'em all dead. If they somehow found out their leader Graydon Creed had mutant parents—a secret he and Bastion have tried very hard to keep hidden—they would definitely feel betrayed. And it's information the FoH could've gotten: *Daily Bugle* reporter Nick Bandouveris uncovered Creed's mutant connection, and was killed by Bastion because of it. But if Bandouveris leaked this li'l tidbit to the Friends as insurance before he got aced, this organization would have no qualms about knocking off Creed.

ODDS: 5-2. Like Creed, the FoH are also pawns of Bastion and took orders from him. So if they pulled the trigger, the termination order would've come from only one man....

SUSPECT: Bastion

MOTIVE: The main goal of Bastion, through his Operation: Zero Tolerance international strike force, is the extermination of all mutant life —can't get much more of a motive than that. With the general population of the Marvel Universe still mourning the loss of its heroes after the "Onslaught" storyline last summer, assassinating a very popular presidential candidate would be the perfect way to push the human race into his way of thinking: the only good mutants are dead mutants. Making Creed a martyr would only help Bastion's cause. Not only would this make it easier and more acceptable to capture and eliminate all mutants, but the additional funding and power granted to Operation: Zero Tolerance would make Bastion even more powerful than he is now.

ODDS: 2-1. The only thing better than Creed making a faux martyr of himself is for Bastion to have a real (and very dead) martyr to his cause. And Bastion *did* kill that reporter with an energy blast similiar to the one that disintegrated Creed.

Oh, and look at this guy closely: his pinkish skin tone kinda looks like Nimrod, the futuristic Super-Sentinel whose programming dictates the death of all mutants. Sure, Nimrod was seemingly destroyed when he went through the Siege Perilous (in *Uncanny X-Men* #247), but if Rogue survived a trip through the Siege, why not him? Plus, he merged with *another* Sentinel killer (Master Mold) while doing so, gaining sentience in the process. We're betting he IS a Nimrod-esque Sentinel, if not a Nimrod/Master Mold amalgam.

So...book 'im, Danno—he's our guy. W

The Wizard Staff killed Graydon Creed. There. We said it. Whewwww, man it feels good to get that monkey off our backs.

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Batman Lite

WILL AUDIENCES EMBRACE NEW FACES AND A LIGHTER TONE IN THE FOURTH BAT-FILM?

By Rob Allstetter

INSIDE A DOME IN LONG BEACH, CALIF., the Batcave—five months in the making—glistens, lights splashing over its metallic features and gigantic stalactites.

The set of "Batman & Robin" is heavily guarded, after earlier security breaches by paparazzi desperate for the first glimpses of one of the year's most-anticipated films.

The crew—and many of the more than 100 guests on the set this January afternoon—circle the left side of the cave, out of camera's way, to watch George Clooney's Bruce Wayne and Chris O'Donnell's Dick Grayson run through a scene.

They extend their necks to hear every word as Clooney addresses the subject of trust with his partner in crimefighting. Director Joel Schumacher cuts the scene—"That was great, George. Let's do another."—and, after one last take, announces over an address system that this has been the final scene between Clooney and O'Donnell.

Applause breaks out. A standing ovation.

"Friday, we shoot day No. 1 of 'Batman 5,' " Schumacher then cracks, drawing roars of laughter. "George and Chris should be in makeup at 4 a.m."

QUIPS ASIDE, less than a month later reports are already flying in from Hollywood about Schumacher's involvement in a fifth Bat-flick. Warner Bros. seems confident that the director, who steered the franchise back into blockbuster waters two years ago with "Batman Forever," has another hit looming this summer. Facing a stellar cast—which also includes action-movie legend Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze, tall and tempting Uma Thurman as Poison Ivy and teen diva Alicia Silverstone as Batgirl—other studios, leery of the film's power, are leaving the much-desired June 20 premiere date all alone to "Batman & Robin," almost guaranteeing a huge opening.

But what of this fourth installment, which has to follow in the footsteps of the top-grossing film of 1995? Even with a star-studded cast and the power of the "Batman" franchise behind it, questions swirl around the film. Questions such as:

With a third new Batman in four films, is Batman interchangeable? Will the media monster that is Schwarzenegger freeze out rookie Batman Clooney's clout? Will audiences accustomed to the dark elements in the previous films embrace a bouncier tone (critics seeing the trailers have nicknamed the project "Batman Lite")? Will moviegoers come down with a case of "sequelitis" and tire of "Batman"? *Wizard* tracked down the answers.

All photos by Christine Loss

Will the public embrace a new actor playing Batman?

With Clooney's heartthrob reputation built from the top-rated television series "ER," there's no recognition problem. However, the right man is still important, and Clooney's been so-so at the box office with his previous films, such as "From Dusk Till Dawn" and "One Fine Day." Schumacher, though, was ecstatic to get Clooney, and his very vocal support of the actor has not been due to the reported troubles he had with former Batman Val Kilmer.

"George is the most humane, the most accessible Batman—less of the dark, brooding, damaged Batman," Schumacher says.

"He's brought more heart to Batman," adds producer Peter Macgregor-Scott. "He has his dark moments, there's no question about that, but he's not as dark as the previous two Batmen."

Clooney says he has deliberately lightened his approach to the character.

"We tried to get some of the moodiness out," the actor says. "We've seen his parents are dead. [People] don't want to hear about something that happened 34 years ago, you know, when your parents were killed. Because you've got a nice house, and you get to go out with all the beautiful women, and have all the cool toys.

"So I think that element is kind of gone. It's also easier to be the third Batman, I think, than Val had it being the second. Because now we've established that I'm quite easily replaced."

Adds Schumacher: "He's older than Val. A lot of Val's struggle in 'Batman Forever'—which I think he did great—[was that] he still had a lot of the vestiges of the child and the teenager. For most of us, in the modern world, we expect somebody George's age to be a man [who has] left a lot of the

Clooney gets his nose squished in the Batsuit (far left), a hush-hush story arc explores the Alfred/Bruce relationship (above) and Schwarzenegger steals the show as the villainous Mr. Freeze

"If you had to really wear this thing, everybody would kick the hell out of you."

—GEORGE CLOONEY ON THE BATSUIT

childhood traumas behind him and is much more concerned with life today."

Life today is an amazing juggling act for Clooney, who works on "Batman & Robin" Friday through Sunday and as Dr. Doug Ross on "ER" the rest of the week. And then there's the Batman suit…

"It's awful," Clooney says. "It's this hard rubber, but it's about 50 pounds. And the hardest part is that your ears are covered, and your eyes, and your nose is plugged up. I think the most I keep it on is about 15 minutes. And then you're out of it. And you're just soaking wet.

"It's just really heavy, and really hard to wear. And you can't move. It's so funny—if you had to really wear this thing, everybody would kick the hell out of you."

Will Schwarzenegger—he of the $25-million pricetag and massive screen presence—dominate the film and overshadow Clooney?

"Yeah, I'll be overshadowed," Clooney admits. "That's part of the gig. That's the way it works. Batman isn't the most interesting character in the Batman projects."

Since Jack Nicholson's Joker in the first film, the Bat-villains have stolen the spotlight. And the actors playing the bad guys have been among the most recognizable screen names—Jack Nicholson, Danny DeVito, Michelle Pfeiffer, Tommy Lee Jones and Jim Carrey.

"They're going to call [the film] 'Batman and Arnold,' " laughs Schwarzenegger.

Mr. Freeze is easily the most powerful of the villains Batman has faced in the series, setting up a climactic battle at the Gotham City Observatory.

"Mr. Freeze is a very entertaining kind of a character, because he's always running around trying to freeze everything," Schwarzenegger says. "Freeze Gotham, freeze the world, and tear Batman's heart out and see his heart freeze slowly in your hand. It's this total madness, continuously, all because he thinks that Batman killed his wife."

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Freeze is abetted by Thurman's Poison Ivy, who adds to the film's enormous sex appeal—the film also includes Elle Macpherson as Bruce Wayne's fiancée, model Vendela Thomassen and Vivica A. Fox ("Independence Day")—and plants devious thoughts in our heroes.

"She is delicious as Poison Ivy; very wicked and very funny and amazingly beautiful," Schumacher says.

And, providing one of the coolest parts of the trailer is Bane, the Venom-pumped bodyguard of Poison Ivy, who literally lifts up the Bat-signal. Bane is played by former professional wrestler Jeep Swenson, who even makes Schwarzenegger look small.

"He's got 28½-inch biceps," Schumacher marvels. "Bane is incredible."

After a trailer that many hardcore Bat-fans railed against on the Internet as being campy, has the series moved from the Dark Knight to Schumacher's "Batman Lite"?

"This is definitely not Frank Miller's view of Batman—not at all," Schumacher says. "But none of [the films] have been. Frank Miller's [*The Dark Knight Returns*] story is really a Clint Eastwood kind of character.

"You go to the comic book store, you'll see at least a dozen versions of Batman—from the darkest, darkest gothic vampire Batman to whatever is the most humorous one that month.

"We have so many audiences to serve with a Batman film."

The thinking is an action-adventure style movie will probably appeal to most of those audiences; hence that slant in this installment.

"One of the key things we learned with 'Batman Forever'—with whatever mistakes we had made—[was that] some of the things we did achieve were the humor and the action," Schumacher says. "That's why

The sexy Uma Thurman as Poison Ivy (far left) headlines a sizable supporting cast that includes Alicia Silverstone (middle, between O'Donnell and Clooney) as Batgirl and former pro wrestler Jeep Swenson as Ivy's bodyguard Bane (below with Thurman)

Howard Stern as Scarecrow?

"Batman & Robin" isn't in theaters yet—heck, post-production isn't even completed—and already the buzz has started on a fifth Batman film.

Joel Schumacher will likely be back as director, and Mark Protosevich is writing the script. *Daily Variety* reports that the Scarecrow and Harley Quinn will be the villains. Radio shock jock Howard Stern, fresh off his biohit "Private Parts," had been rumored as a candidate for the Scarecrow, but both he and Schumacher deny his involvement.

George Clooney and Chris O'Donnell will likely return as Batman and Robin.

"I like doing Robin," O'Donnell says. "I hope they do another one. I like making the Batman films."

The yet-untitled film is tentatively scheduled for a 1999 release. *RA*

I asked Arnold to be Mr. Freeze, because I thought we could do a real action side of the movie, so that Batman and Robin could do what they do in the comic books. We have real action, and Arnold is such a formidable foe.

"Because I knew Poison Ivy was going be the other villain and because she's a seductress—a lover, not a fighter—I knew that would be sexy and funny and evil. But we'd give all the guys their action movie at the same time."

Inside sources indicate there are serious, character-driven sides and emotional moments to the film, too, including a hush-hush plot arc that involves the Bruce/Alfred relationship, as well as the introduction of Barbara Wilson, Alfred's ward, who becomes Batgirl (played by Silverstone) in the third act.

"I hope we've nailed it. There are so many different elements to it," Schumacher says. "There's a very intense story between Alfred and Bruce Wayne, and there's a lot of conflict between Batman and Robin."

But O'Donnell insists this film hasn't strayed too far from the successful Bat-premise.

"I think maybe [this one] is a little more upbeat," he says. "But it hasn't changed that much."

And, finally, can Batman again prevail over sequelitis?

The philosophy seems to be to take what has worked in the previous Batman films and push it even more. Bigger will be better.

"It's bigger than 'Batman Forever,' " Schumacher promises. "We are very ambitious."

"The thing was not to make it the same, but to make it fresh," says Macgregor-Scott. "The visual effects world has grown a great deal, even in the last two years. We're able to do so much more—things that were not possible before, or things that were possible, but the quality now is increased."

Even Batman himself is struck by the sheer magnitude of the film.

"It's twice as big as the last one," Clooney says. "I said to Joel Schumacher the other day—we're on the set, and it's the biggest set I've ever seen in my life—I said, 'I'm intimidated by this damn thing.' And he goes, 'So am I. I've never seen anything this large in my life.' " W

Rob Allstetter, Wizard's regular "Trailer Park" columnist, is neither a lover nor a fighter, but he makes do. Additional reporting by Jenny Peters.

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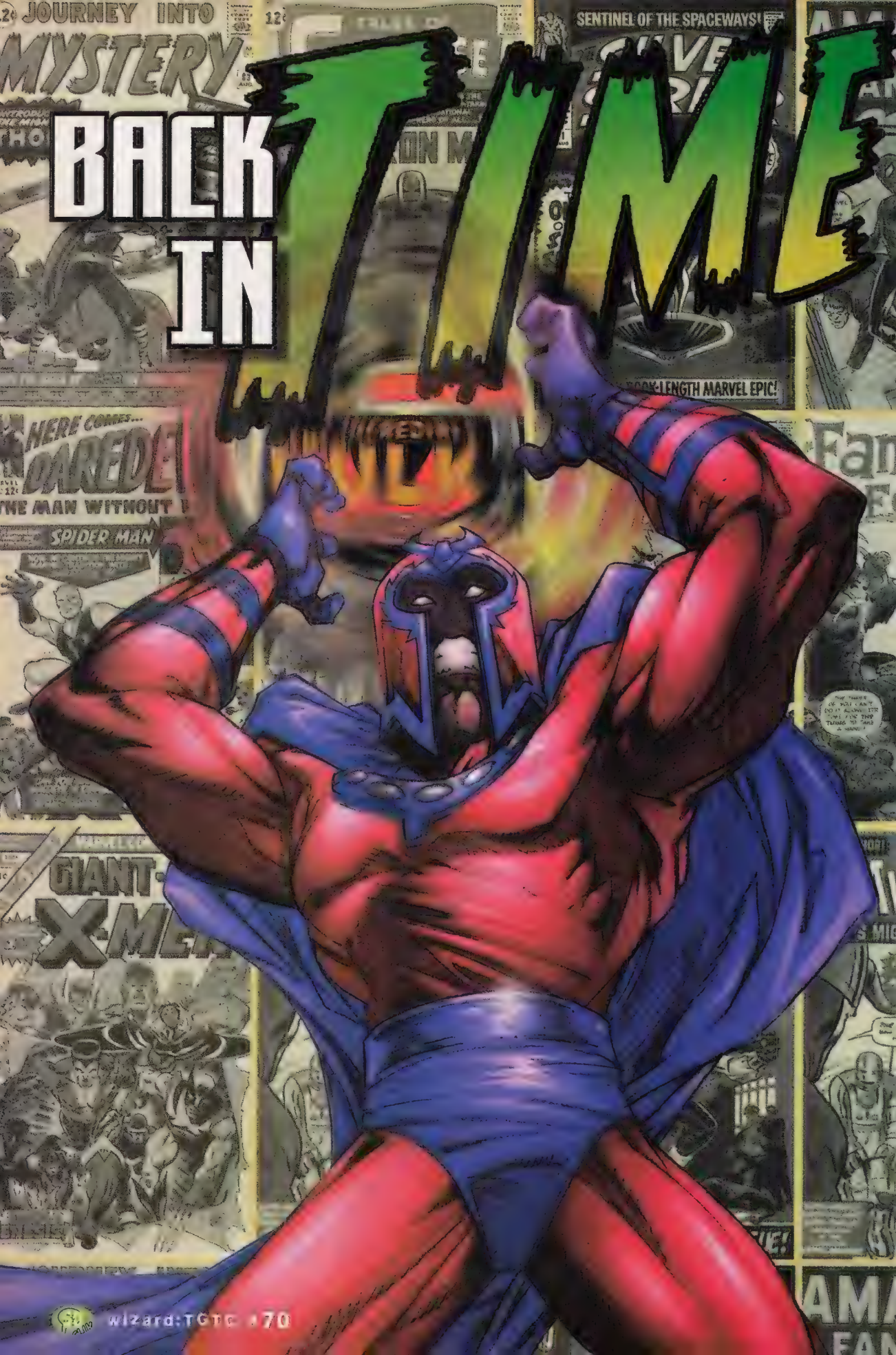
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MARVEL'S 'FLASHBACK MONTH' SPOTLIGHTS YOUR FAVORITE HEROES BEFORE THEY DONNED THEIR TIGHTS

Say goodbye to the X-Men and wave adios to Spider-Man. Marvel Comics is ditching its superheroes this May in a month-long "Flashback" event. And Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras couldn't be happier.

"How do you do a Spider-Man story without Spider-Man?" he asks laughingly. "It's a good question."

The high concept behind "Flashback Month," according to Harras, "is going back in time to just before *Fantastic Four* #1, just before the start of the Marvel Universe. We see what our characters were doing before they were heroes and see what made them who they are today."

Practically all the Marvel Universe titles will flash back in May, with self-contained untold tales of the Marvel Universe numbered #-1. New titles like *Ka-Zar* and *Thunderbolts* won't have #-1 flashbacks, but will join in the fun with special "Flashback" one-shots in addition to their regular issues. The "Heroes Reborn" titles and mini-series currently in progress will not be affected.

Besides retro stories, all "Flashback" titles will sport an old-time look. The upper-left corner box and Comics Code Authority stamp on the "Flashback" comic covers will be greatly enlarged, harkening back to Marvel's '60s look, when establishing its brand name (and gaining Code approval) was much more important than it is today. Book logos will also be a blast from the past, as current Marvel tiles active in the '60s will carry their '60s logos. Newer titles will showcase new '60s-style logos for the event and it all adds up to what Harras hopes will be a bit of fun for readers.

"I like to have some lighthearted stuff as a kick-off to summer," Harras says. "[*X-Men* writer] Scott Lobdell came up with the original 'Flashback' idea as an X-Men crossover, but when we took it into an editorial meeting everyone said, 'Why make it X-specific? Let's expand it and have some fun across the whole Marvel Universe.'"

The fun factor will be increased by the man who co-founded the Marvel Universe: Stan Lee. "Stan appears in all 'Flashbacks' as a cartoony narrator," Harras says. "It's an outgrowth of the Stan Lee narration we had in *Generation X* #17, which went over very well. He's writing all his own dialogue and he's very pumped up about it.

"This whole month," continues Harras, "shows that the Marvel Universe has always been a fascinating place, even before there were heroes in it."

Here's what readers can expect to see when they're sent back in time this May....

X-FAMILY

TITLE: Uncanny X-Men #-1
WRITER: Scott Lobdell
ARTISTS: Joe Madureira and Tim Townsend

"It's a buried story from the past, but that's not to say it's unimportant. In fact, it's incredibly important," writer Scott Lobdell says. *Uncanny X-Men* #-1 deals with both the origin of Bastion (who's currently wreaking havoc throughout the mutant titles) and the falling-out between Rachel Summers (Phoenix) and Sanctity, who was prominently featured in *X-Men: Askani'Son*. If you're not in the know, the Askani is a sisterhood of the future whose members try to carry on the teachings of Charles Xavier while battling villains in a world ruled by Apocalypse.

"Sanctity comes to the past for the purpose of doing major harm to Bolivar Trask, the man who created the Sentinels," Lobdell says. "But she really has an even more devious plan in mind." Merely traveling back in time sets Sanctity against Rachel, who's the Mother Askani. "Sanctity has taken the Askani teachings and turned them on their ear," Lobdell explains. "Messing with the timestream is breaking a major rule. But what Sanctity has in mind, once she gets to the past, is even worse."

TITLE: X-Men #-1
WRITER: Scott Lobdell
ARTISTS: Carlos Pacheco and Art Thibert

"It's an extremely heavy story," says Scott Lobdell, the book's writer. "It might be the heaviest 'Flashback' going this month."

X-Men #-1 revolves around two good friends about to become bitter rivals. "It's the last time Charles Xavier and Erik Lehnsherr [Magneto] see each other before they confront each other in *X-Men* [series 1] #1," he says. "They know they have the same goal, but they also know they have different methods. It's a last-ditch effort to see if there isn't some way they might come together before they lob out the first volley and fight against each other."

Marvel legend Stan Lee introduces each "Flashback" issue (at right), while Magneto makes a fateful choice in *X-Men* #-1 (opp.)

BY JIM MCLAUCHLIN

The issue also puts into play events that turn Lehnsherr, once and for all, into Magneto. Says Lobdell, "It's going to fill in a lot of spaces for *X-Men* readers."

TITLE: Wolverine #-1
WRITER: Larry Hama
ARTIST: Cary Nord

"I'm going to look at a few of the little things in Wolverine's character," Wolverine writer Larry Hama says, "some [of Wolverine's] attributes and how he came by them." Hama promises to explain Wolverine's ever-present cowboy hat, his affection for cigars and how he came by the nickname "Canucklehead." Hama also promises guest stars a-plenty. "Nick Fury will be appearing, as will Carol Danvers. We all know they've got some history with Wolverine." Ben Grimm, before he became the Fantastic Four's Thing, also appears.

But how much light will this story shed on the shrouded mystery of Wolvie's past? Not much, says Hama. "His memories are already pretty scrambled at this point. We'll add some color to his origins, but we're not going to dispel the mystery."

TITLE: Generation X #-1
WRITER: James Robinson
ARTIST: Chris Bachalo

"Oh, it's a challenge," writer James Robinson says with just a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "What would you do with a cast of characters that would be five years old in this case?" The answer is simple: Take a look at someone older.

So while the teens of *Generation X* take a break for the month, we are treated to a story about their teachers. In the issue, Sean Cassidy (a.k.a. Banshee), is a New York City police detective. We see his confrontation with a very young Emma Frost, the woman who will one day become the White Queen. "Emma learns a secret about Sean that she still keeps to this day," Robinson hints. "And we get the surprise appearance of somebody we don't think was even present in this time period. Oh, but he was."

Peter Parker and his Uncle Ben have a heart-to-heart amid classic Marvel monsters (shown here and opposite, below)

TITLE: X-Man #-1
WRITER: Terry Kavanagh
ARTISTS: Roger Cruz and Bud LaRosa

"Stan Lee is narrating," says *X-Man* writer Terry Kavanagh, "but I'm taking the approach that this is a glance into a corner of the Marvel Universe that even Stan's afraid to venture into." Kavanagh will be showing readers of *X-Man* #-1 a snapshot of Nate Grey's daily life in the Age of Apocalypse, the alternate reality where X-Man was genetically engineered by Mr. Sinister.

"Nate ventures out of Sinister's lab for the first time, and it's a bit daunting for him since he's only six years old." Still, Kavanagh says, "the story is as much about Sinister as it is about Nate. He's just realizing as Nate escapes his lab that he's created the ultimate mutant. Even Sinister doesn't know what the ramifications of his creation will be."

SPIDER-FAMILY

TITLE: Amazing Spider-Man #-1
WRITER: Tom DeFalco
ARTISTS: Joe Bennett and Bud LaRosa

"All the stuff we show you here will have repercussions," guarantees *Amazing* scribe Tom DeFalco. "And it all revolves around the Kingpin."

While Wilson Fisk (the Kingpin of Crime) works his way up the underworld ladder, Daily Bugle columnist and current *Amazing* supporting character Jay Conover reports on it. There are cameo appearances by *Marvels*' Phil Sheldon and other Marvel residents. As for the pre-pubescent Peter Parker, he's doing what most 12-year-olds do best.

"Peter finds a stash of his Uncle Ben's

See Peter Parker's parents as spies in *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* #-1

old Golden Age comics and reads them, fantasizing about what it would be like to have superpowers," DeFalco explains. "He thinks it would be great to have powers and fight crime, but we all know that there are some dangers involved with that kind of wish fulfillment."

TITLE: Peter Parker, Spider-Man #-1
WRITER: Howard Mackie
ARTISTS: John Romita Jr. and Scott Hanna

"At first, I was skeptical about doing a Spider-Man story without Spider-Man," says writer Howard Mackie. "But once I started it, I had an unbelievably great time."

Mackie says young Peter Parker takes a back seat as *Peter Parker, Spider-Man* #-1 focuses on the book's supporting cast. "We look at Arthur Stacy, who is a private investigator currently appearing in Peter Parker. In the old days, he was working corporate security for Osborn Industries." At the time, Osborn Industries was headed by Norman Osborn, the man who would one day become the original Green Goblin. "It gives insight as to what Arthur's doing now in the title, and we get to see Norman Osborn's early experiments in taking the Goblin Formula," Mackie says. "There's a lot of really twisted stuff involving Osborn. You see just how evil he was, even before he was the Goblin."

TITLE: Sensational Spider-Man #-1
WRITER: Todd DeZago
ARTISTS: Mike Wieringo and Richard Case

"I admit it. Mike Wieringo and I were really frustrated over this one," *Sensational* writer Todd DeZago says. The plan was to shed a little light on one of Marvel's most pivotal, yet least-seen characters, Peter Parker's Uncle Ben. The creators had Ben and a 12-year-old Peter going fishing for a little man-to-man chat, but beyond that…nothing sprung to mind. "Then it hit me," DeZago says, "I started to think about the times and what was big then. The big thing Marvel was doing was monster comics."

So instead of reeling in trout and bass, Peter and Ben hook Gigantus, the Monster Who Walked Like a Man and Groot, the Monster from Planet X. "Just thinking about what these monsters would look like under Mike's pencil and his weird view got me excited," DeZago adds. "And wait till you see the double-twist ending."

TITLE: Spectacular Spider-Man #-1
WRITER: J.M. DeMatteis
ARTISTS: Luke Ross and Dan Green

"It explains essentially how [Flash Thompson] came to be the jerk he is today," writer J.M. DeMatteis says.

"It goes into the past to examine Flash's relationship with his alcoholic father," DeMatteis continues, "and it ties directly to Flash's alcoholism today. It's the mirror of what's happening to him in the current story."

Flash started out as the original Marvel jerk, bullying and demeaning young Peter Parker throughout high school. But, DeMatteis says, "Stories like this are important to add depth. We all knew that Flash was terrible as a youngster, but we never knew why. I think by the time people read this, they'll actually be feeling some sympathy for him."

MARVEL UNIVERSE

TITLE: Daredevil #-1
WRITER: Joe Kelly
ARTIST: Gene Colan

It's time for a flashback we all can remember: The first day of school.

Matt Murdock, the man who will become Daredevil, is dropped off at college by his father, Battlin' Jack Murdock. "It's one of the more human-heavy stories I've written," says writer Joe Kelly. "Jack's always wanted the best for his son, but he's a bit out of his element here. He's a boxer, a real Hell's Kitchen guy. He's not very comfortable in a college environment."

The parting of father and son not only makes for a moment, but adds some character depth as well. "It adds a dimension to Jack, who's always been portrayed so tough," Kelly adds. "In the end, we see that old Battlin' Jack actually has a very hard time letting go of his son."

TITLE: The Incredible Hulk #-1
WRITER: Peter David
ARTISTS: Adam Kubert and Mark Farmer

Peter David, who's had a fair amount of experience writing for

FLASHBACK FLASHES

Here's a rundown of the rest of the Marvel "#-1" issues comin' at ya in May:

ALPHA FLIGHT: IN THE BEGINNING...

In this "Flashback" special, James Hudson works on constructing Weapon Alpha, his high-tech combat suit. We see the behind-the-scenes making of Canada's superteam.

CABLE

It's the pre-X-Men days, as Cable arrives in the 20th century for the real first time and meets up with—who else?—Moira MacTaggart and Charles Xavier.

DEADPOOL

Before he was Deadpool the deadly psycho assassin, he was Wade Wilson the just-plain psycho. Find out what made Wade into an assassin and maybe get a peek at his face before it got... uh, altered.

ELEKTRA

A young Elektra meets Stick, the mysterious mentor for both her and Daredevil, for the very first time.

EXCALIBUR

Before Excalibur and before the X-Men, Nightcrawler was Kurt Wagner, trapeze artist. Follow the traveling circus for a look back at the mutant's early days.

GHOST RIDER

Learn the secrets of both Ghost Riders—Johnny Blaze and Danny Ketch—and find out why becoming the Spirit of Vengeance is a family tradition.

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY

Allfather Odin confronts Seth, the serpent-god of death for the very first time. Plus, readers get a pre-Thor look at Dr. Don Blake.

SILVER SURFER

Think the Surfer first appeared on Earth in *Fantastic Four #48*? Think again. This issue shows us Surfy's very first Earthly contact.

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN

The retro-Spider title gets even more retro as Roger Stern and John Romita Sr. bring us a tale of Peter Parker's S.H.I.E.L.D.-agent parents. Plus, cartoonist Fred Hembeck does a humorous "L'il Petey" back-up strip.

VENOM: SEED OF DARKNESS (at right)

This "Flashback" one-shot tells a deep, undercover tale of Eddie Brock, the hard-luck investigative reporter who later became Venom.

X-FACTOR

Find out what happened to Havok the first time his mutant powers manifested and how it made him into the... uh... overly aggressive man he is today.

X-FORCE

In a time before X-Force even existed, learn all about John Proudstar, the former X-Man known as Thunderbird and big-brother of X-Force's Warpath. ■ *JM*

movies and TV, takes a dramatic approach to the Hulk's tale. "The story features Stan Lee as the leader of an acting troupe," David says, "and the actors, while never named, look a heck of a lot like the artists and editors of the book."

While the creators set up the stage, David emphasizes the familiar *Hulk* characters are still the stars. "This issue focuses on Bruce Banner's relationship with his father and answers questions that have been floating around for years. We know that Bruce's father is dead, but we've never known the circumstances."

TITLE: Ka-Zar: Sibling Rivalries
WRITERS: Mark Waid and Todd DeZago
ARTIST: John Cassidy

Sibling Rivalry gets to the bottom of why Parnival the Plunderer hates Ka-Zar so much and wants revenge against him at all costs. "It's a parallel story," explains co-writer Todd DeZago. "The story bounces between Ka-Zar in the Savage Land and New York City, where his brother Parnival is." The story deals with how the loss of the boys' father affected them. "Both are teenagers in this story, and the death of their father is quite hurtful. There are lessons they learn in this issue, but seeing as how they're so different from each other, they take them to heart differently."

TITLE: Thunderbolts: Distant Rumblings
WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTIST: Steve Epting

"*Distant Rumblings* is a series of vignettes," writer Kurt Busiek says, "tied together by showing what pointed these characters on the path they're on today."

The idea behind *Thunderbolts* is the team is really a group of villains masquerading as heroes. Here, Busiek gets his chance to explain the largely unexplored background of half-a-dozen baddies. "The great thing," he says, "is that nobody ever examines villains like they do heroes. Look at the Beetle, or Mach-1, as he's now called. No one's ever got into his motivation. We've all assumed he's just plain bad. Well, I think no one's plain."

In Adventures of McLauchlin-Man *#-1, we flash back to Young Jim as he refuses to go to Catholic school and gets beat up by neighborhood thug Roochie Dudak.*

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Wizard *casts the* 'Age of Apocalypse' *movie!*

Casting call

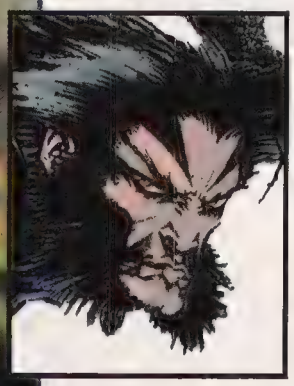
By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos by the Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

What if the X-Men's founder was murdered before he could create his team of mutants?

That was the premise of the X-titles' "Age of Apocalypse" storyline, where Professor Charles Xavier was killed back in the 1940s, creating a completely different scenario in the present. Here, the evil Apocalypse has taken control of the Earth and mutants are used for his vile experiments. Fighting him is a band of rebels called the X-Men (founded instead by Magneto).

It ain't pretty, but it would make a fantastic movie. Hey, it's worked for other time-travel, apocalyptic-future movies like "The Terminator" and "12 Monkeys." And, like those flicks, all this film needs is actors that can pull it off. Read on to see who we'd choose...

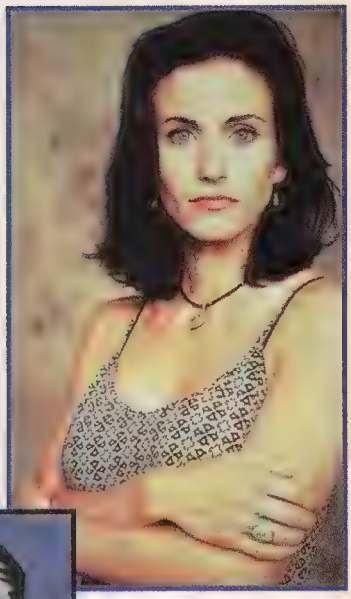


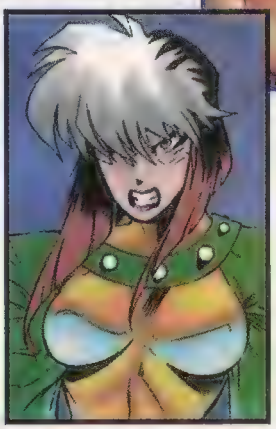
WEAPON X

Weapon X, the one-handed fighting machine, has to be played by Robert De Niro. In "Cape Fear," De Niro proved his 5-foot-something body could kick anyone's ass.

MAGNETO

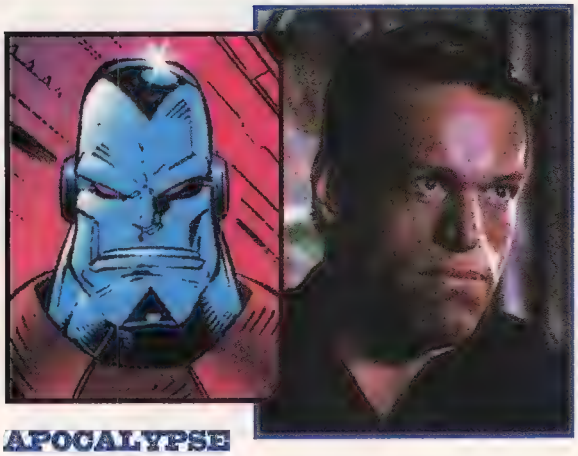
The stoic hero in a billion movies, Christopher Lambert ("Mortal Kombat," "Highlander") has plenty of experience to know just how Magneto should act.





ROGUE

Courteney Cox ("Friends") has what it takes to play Magneto's powerful wife. She's definitely got the looks (including beautiful big eyes) and the self-assured demeanor; all she needs is that southern drawl and that white streak in her hair.

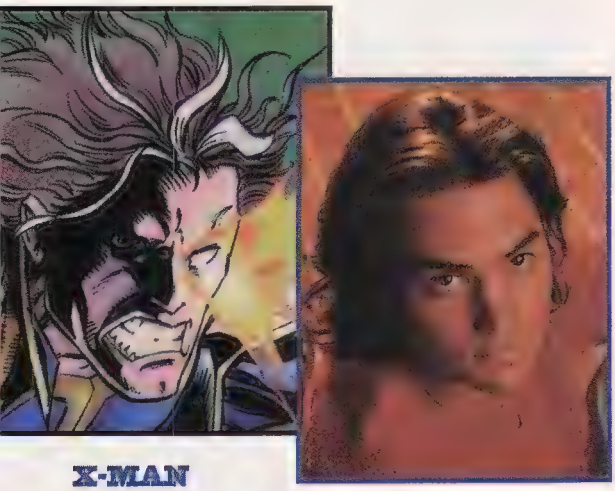


APOCALYPSE

Brian Thompson has the face of an evil megalomaniac and is used to portraying unstoppable bad guys (like on "The X-Files" and "Lionheart"), so he's our pick for Apocalypse.

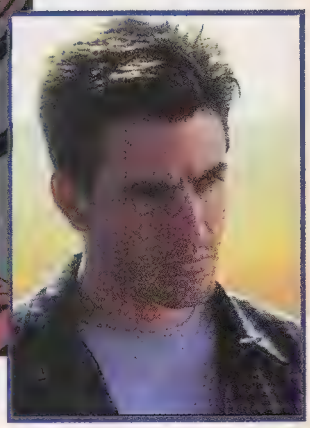
GAMBIT

Gambit, the unpredictable Cajun rebel, needs to be played by a rugged actor. Dermot Mulroney ("Young Guns," "The Trigger Effect") fits the bill.



X-MAN

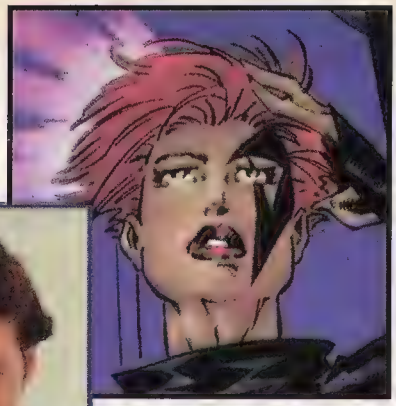
For X-Man, the telekinetic kid whom everyone was trying to kill, we chose Barry Watson ("7th Heaven"). All he's gotta do is act angry and confused, and he'd have the part down pat.



CYCLOPS

He's handled tough-guy roles before (like in "Escape from L.A." and "Big Trouble in Little China"), so we thought Kurt Russell would make a super Cyclops.

© Wayne Stambler/Outline



JEAN GREY

Carey Lowell ("Law & Order") is plenty athletic to portray the short-haired Jean Grey. And her strong acting skills would keep her from being upstaged by De Niro as her partner, Weapon X.

BISHOP

Ving Rhames ("Mission: Impossible," "Pulp Fiction") *is* Bishop. He's mean. He's tough. And all he needs is an "M" over his eye and a big gun.

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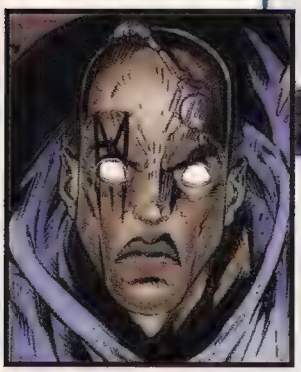
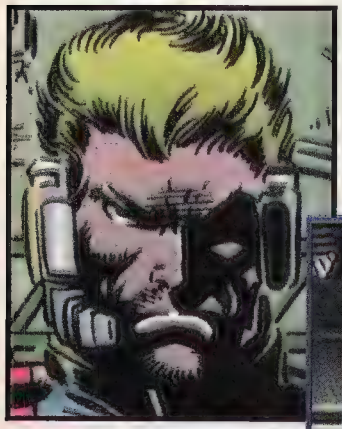


SINISTER

Sinister is sneaky, greedy and despicable. Throw some makeup on him, and Jimmy Smits ("NYPD Blue") would be great in this role.

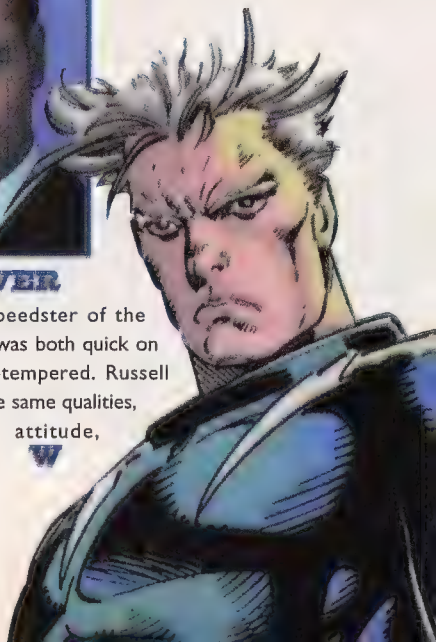


HAVOK

Stephen Baldwin ("The Usual Suspects") is gruff enough to play the energy-wielding brother of Cyclops.

QUICKSILVER

As the resident speedster of the rebels, Quicksilver was both quick on his feet and quick-tempered. Russell Crowe displayed the same qualities, along with an attitude, in "Virtuosity." W



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LAST MAN STANDING

'WIZARD' RANKS THE 10 TOUGHEST SUPERHEROES IN COMICS

It's the debate that's been raging in comicdom for over 50 years: "My favorite superhero can kick your favorite's ass!" And there's never been a clear-cut answer.

Until now.

What *Wizard* has done is gathered up all the superheroes in comicdom, pitted them against one-another and determined not only who the 10 most powerful superheroes are, but how they placed on that Top 10 list as well.

Our criteria for placement was as follows:

1) Only superheroes allowed. No supervillains or ridiculously cosmic beings of a higher "universal" order (like Galactus, Highfather, Neron or Mephisto) allowed.

And...

2) This was treated as a no-holds-barred, do-or-die contest. Each character is giving it his all in the battles we've set before them.

With that said, meet the #10 man on the list...

10) HULK

HIS DEAL: Caught in the heart of a gamma bomb explosion, genius scientist Dr. Robert Bruce Banner finds himself transformed into a 7-foot, one-ton green behemoth with near-unlimited strength, rapid tissue-regenerative powers and nigh-inexhaustible stamina.

WHY HE'S #10: "Hulk smash!"...and that's about it. Yeah, he may possess Banner's keen scientific mind and the ruthless cunning of Mr. Fixit, but on this list of supermen, warrior women and Norse gods, the Hulk's muscle just ain't enough to overcome the #10 slot.

BY THE WIZARD STAFF

9) FIRESTORM

HIS DEAL: Trapped in an experimental nuclear reactor, high school student Ronnie Raymond and Prof. Martin Stein gained the ability to merge into the superhero Firestorm, a being with the ability to alter his own molecular density and the molecular configuration of all inanimate matter.

WHY HE'S #9: Ronnie's a young turk who's easily distracted, even with Stein playing the brainy scientist. While the Hulk's limited powers are something Ronnie could handle, any of the more varied attacks from the really diversified guys on this list would clean Ronnie's clock.

VS. HULK: One heavy-duty adamantium prison cell whipped up outta nowhere, and the Hulk is outta the fight in five seconds flat.

8) PROFESSOR X (PRE-ONSLAUGHT)

HIS DEAL: Born a mutant, Prof. X is the world's most powerful telepath. Despite being wheelchair-bound, he can read minds, control minds and wipe minds clean.

WHY HE'S #8: While the good professor may possess the most powerful melon on Earth, his frail body would prove too much a liability against the powerhouses on this list.

VS. HULK: No contest. Prof. X would sense ol' Green-genes' thoughts from a mile away, and after having zero success trying to reason with him, turn ol' Jade Jaws into a green vegetable.

VS. FIRESTORM: Before Firestorm could think of a way to nix him, Prof. X would "hear" his thoughts and force Stein and Raymond to separate into their powerless civilian personas.

7) SPAWN

HIS DEAL: Making a deal with the devil, government assassin Al Simmons was resurrected with a price: finite magical powers capable of nearly any feat imaginable but, when exhausted, will drag him back to Hell to lead its forces against Heaven.

WHY HE'S #7: His fear of using his finite powers against the titans on this list would give his opponents an opportunity to get a second shot in—which, against this crowd, would be one shot too many.

VS. HULK: Spawn has lost body parts in the past without sweating it too much, so while the greenskin goliath may punch an arm or two off, Spawny-guy here can take the punishment and blast the big guy to atoms.

VS. FIRESTORM: Though they have similar powers, Spawn has the edge in that he can also create things outta *nothing*. Bound by common physics, Firestorm wouldn't have a prayer against a guy who has the powers of Hell behind him.

VS. PROF. X: When Chuck probes a disturbing alienish mind, he gets all disoriented—and they don't come more disturbing than resurrected government hitmen/generals-in-training for Satan's war against Heaven. The second Charlie taps into Al's noggin, BAM!, the Professor'd be stunned for a few seconds and that's all Al'd need to leave Chuck a stain in a wheelchair.

6) DR. STRANGE

HIS DEAL: As our dimension's Sorcerer Supreme, Stephen Strange stands as the first and last line of defense against all magic-based menaces that threaten our dimension.

WHY HE'S #6: While he's beaten cosmic menaces to save the universe countless times, Doc Strange is only human with limited stamina, speed and reflexes.

VS. HULK: He's beaten the Hulk before (*Hulk* #300), and he'd do it again. Teleporting him to another dimension, forcing him to sleep, making the Hulk believe he's already won the fight and getting him to walk away…the list goes on and on.

VS. FIRESTORM: Know how Spawn's mystical powers would overwhelm Firestorm? Doc's spellcasting would do it the same way. Just faster.

VS. PROF. X: Wouldn't Prof. X see him coming? Not when Dr. Strange steps out of a side dimension with a host of spells at the ready, kiboshing the Professor before he had time to spin his wheelchair around.

VS. SPAWN: Two things tip it in Doc's favor. First, he's been around a lot longer, traveled to countless dimensions with varied battlegrounds and has forgotten more mystic battles than Spawn's ever experienced. Secondly, while Spawn is cautious with his power, the Doc would just cut loose.

5) FLASH

HIS DEAL: Wally West taps into the Speed Force, a universal force that gives him the ability to run, think and react at near-lightspeed.
WHY HE'S #5: It's next to impossible to react to this guy's attack. You're not going to see him coming, and by the time you realize he's there, he's already hit you a hundred times over.
VS. HULK: The Flash would just vibrate through the Hulk and, ewww, make him explode.
VS. FIRESTORM: For all his powers, Ronnie'd have no time to react to the Flash or even turn intangible. Flash would be all over this guy like white on rice.
VS. PROF. X: Knowing the Flash is one-tenth of a nanosecond away from clocking you isn't going to do you much good. Bye-bye, Chuck.
VS. SPAWN: 99 percent of Spawn's foes are just big hulking guys relying on raw power. The Flash represents a foe unlike anything ol' Spawny-guy has ever faced, whereas Wally has dealt with magic-based foes before. This fight's over without Al ever knowing who clobbered him.
VS. DR. STRANGE: Same deal as Spawn. Doc Strange isn't going to know what's hitting him and isn't going to stay conscious long enough to find out.

4) WONDER WOMAN

HER DEAL: Spawned by Greek goddesses on the paradise island of Themyscira, Diana is an immortal Amazon granted flight, incredible strength, speed, wisdom and beauty.
WHY SHE'S #4: Raised as an Amazon warrior, Wonder Woman isn't just some muscle-bound brawler—she's a highly skilled warrior who knows how to spot an enemy's weakness and exploit it.
VS. HULK: While the two are pretty evenly matched strength-wise, Diana gets the advantage with speed, flight and warrior skills. As cagey and sharp as the Hulk is, he isn't as skilled in tactical combat.
VS. FIRESTORM: Like Flash, Diana'd use superspeed to land one quick punch. And when you're as strong as the Hulk, that's about all you need.
VS. PROF. X: After countless battles of wills through fighting the Greek gods' magic and bending people to her will through her magic lasso, we see Wonder Woman being grabbed by Chuck telepathically. But a sluggish Diana either grabs the Prof with her lasso and commands him to stop or just hits him with some loose debris. Either scenario takes Charlie outta the fight.
VS. SPAWN: She could take the early hits Spawn would probably nail her with, but she wouldn't be hit by that many. Fueled by speed, strength and warrior know-how, Spawn goes down for the count.
VS. DR. STRANGE: Wonder Woman is based in magic, so while Doc is busy unsuccessfully trying to mess with her on that front (no way is he undoing the work of the Greek gods), Diana's superspeed has her on him from all fronts battering his shields with near-Superman-level strength. With that kind of onslaught, she's bound to tag him once, which is all she needs.
VS. FLASH: We see Diana hammered relentlessly by hundreds of blows from the as-good-as-invisible Flash. But between her nigh-invulnerability, superspeed and canny fighting prowess, she'd eventually detect a pattern in the Flash's attack and stun him with a glancing blow. Long enough for Diana to finish the job and then collapse.

3) SUPERMAN
(PRE-"ELECTRO-SUPERMAN")

HIS DEAL: Rocketed from the exploding planet Krypton, Clark Kent grew to adulthood on Earth to learn that this planet's yellow sun and weaker gravity gave him near-invulnerability, flight, heat vision incredible strength, speed, stamina, hearing, etc. Calling himself Superman, he now fights the never-ending battle for truth, justice and the American way!

WHY HE'S #3: This guy's name pretty much says it all. We've already seen the power the Flash has at his command with superspeed, so when you mix in superstrength, heat vision, invulnerability and the other dozen powers at Supes' command, he becomes fairly unbeatable.

VS. HULK: We actually saw this already in *Marvel versus DC #3*, which saw Supes coming out on top. While the Hulk can stand toe-to-toe in strength, Big Blue's superspeed, flight and heat vision put him over the top.

VS. FIRESTORM: While Supes would be in trouble if Firestorm got a bead on him (Firestorm once trapped Supes in a kryptonite bubble back in *Fury of Firestorm #4*), Supes' speed has him getting the drop on Ronnie, and ending the fight before it ever begins.

VS. PROF. X: Though Supes wouldn't take Chuck down as fast as the Flash did, it would only be by a half-second or so.

VS. SPAWN: For those of you not in the know, magic (along with kryptonite) is one of the few things that really cripples Supes. Good thing Supes' Flash-like speed lets him get in close to Spawn and take him down with a super-punch before Al even knows what hit him.

VS. DR. STRANGE: We see Supes having a lot more trouble with Doc than with Spawn, simply because Doc's a sorcery veteran. But even if he bounced off an initial deflective shield, no way can Doc get a bead on him for a direct attack. A superspeed delivered punch or zap of heat vision wraps up the fight in under a minute.

VS. FLASH: Yeah, the Flash is faster, but Supes ain't no slouch in the speed department, either, giving Wally only a slight edge. Plus, like WW, Supes can take anything the Flash can dish out and eventually land a knock-out blow.

VS. WONDER WOMAN: Now this would be a cool fight! Fairly evenly matched with flight, strength and speed, Supes is still just a little tougher, a little faster and just a tad stronger. Diana would eventually tire, while Supes is a living solar battery with enough power reserves to be the one (barely) standing at the end of the battle.

2) THOR

HIS DEAL: The actual Norse God of Thunder, Thor possesses "normal" Asgardian attributes including immortality, superstrength and nigh-invulnerability. He is armed with Mjolnir, the mystical war hammer capable of opening passageways through space and time, blocking all sorts of energy blasts and bending the elements to its master's will.

WHY HE'S #2: This guy is a Norse god warrior, trained and skilled in the art of battle. And he's been doing it for countless ages. Give him a magical hammer and the power over the elements, and he's unbeatable. Almost.

VS. HULK: The Hulk may be as tough as Thor and as strong as Thor, but Goldilock's got 'im beat in the skill department, seeing as how he's been fighting gods, armies, trolls and wizards for over a millennium. It might mean a couple days bed rest afterward, but Thor wins the belt in this bout.

VS. FIRESTORM: Surprised by the sheer force of the storm and unexpected lightning bursts, Firestorm loses his concentration and becomes tangible. Yeah, he wouldn't be beaten by the storm, but one shot from Mjolnir would knock the Nuclear Man senseless.

VS. PROF. X: Pushing himself to the limits in his search for the mind behind the storm buffeting the mansion (Mjolnir's magic at work), Prof. X detects Thor's presence seconds before Thor clobbers him into unconsciousness.

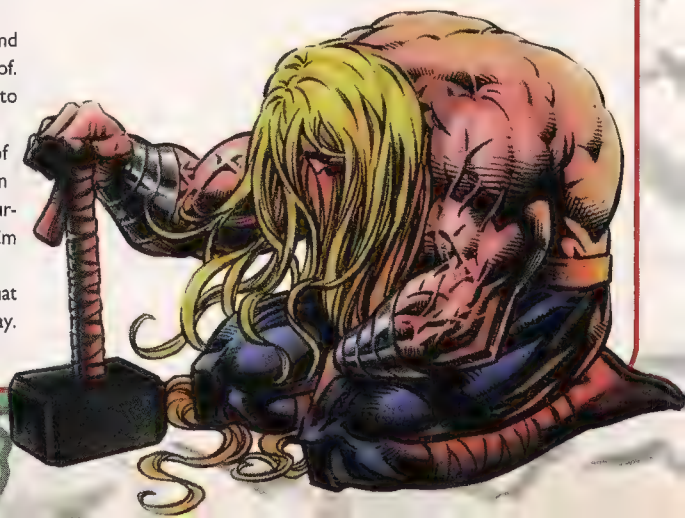
VS. SPAWN: Puh-lease! Thor's already faced down all sorts of demonic magic types like Hela (Asgard's ruler of Hel), so while Spawn may take some time to wear down, trapping him in the middle of a hurricane, hailing a blitzkrieg of lightning bolts on 'im and pounding him with Mjolnir would leave Al a pile of pulpy necroplasm.

VS. DR. STRANGE: Magic? *¡No problema!* You gotta remember that Thor's trusty hammer Mjolnir can handle *any* magic tossed Thor's way. Doc might as well be weaving a blanket instead of a spell, 'cause Thor'd make him say "good night."

VS. FLASH: Similar to his bout with Wonder Woman, the Flash would get in some good shots against the Thunder God…but if it's one thing Thor has shown, it's that he can take punishment. Between the monstrous storm that'd spring up out of nowhere, dodging lightning bolts and whirling hammers, the Flash would eventually be tagged and, well, that'd be that.

VS. WONDER WOMAN: The coolest fight on this whole list!!! Two super-strong, super-tough warriors battling it out with sheer power and skills in a battle that would leave both warriors horrifically wounded and completely exhausted…with Thor the last one standing. He's just tougher, with a billion more lifetimes of battle-experience beneath his belt.

VS. SUPERMAN: While Supes has the edge in speed and flight (Thor gets *pulled* by his hammer; he doesn't really fly.), once again Thor's warrior training and combat experience would give him the edge he needs to have more of his blows connect, eventually laying the Kryptonian flat. It's all in the name: Super-*Man*; Thor, *God* of Thunder.



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1) SILVER SURFER

HIS DEAL: As the former herald of the world-devourer Galactus, Norrin Radd possesses the "power cosmic," an energy source capable of almost any feat imaginable, making him one of the most powerful beings in the cosmos.

WHY HE'S #1: The Surfer is the fringe character that separates humanity from the omnipotence of Galactus or Eternity, making him tops on our list. His power cosmic is so powerful that it's not a matter of what the Surfer can do, it's more what he *can't*. Matter-manipulation, the power reserves of stars, traveling at lightspeed…he may even be able to create life. He's truly in a power class of his own.

VS. HULK: The Hulk may be physically stronger than the Surfer, but c'mon, our boy Norrin would never let the Hulk get near him. He'd zip up on the Hulk at near-lightspeed, unleash just a fraction of the power cosmic and, when the Hulk came to at the bottom of the smoking crater a couple days later, the Surfer'd be done kicking the crap out of the rest of the heroes on this list.

VS. FIRESTORM: No contest. Whatever Ronnie can do, Norrin can undo. With the skill and far greater matter-manipulation power at his command, Firestorm rates a two-panel fight at best.

VS. PROF. X: Yeah, you guessed it, between the Surfer's incomprehensible speed and indomitable will, Prof. X may give the Surfer a run for his money in chess, but not in combat.

VS. SPAWN: The Surfer's faced down Mephisto, Marvel's version of Satan, so a Satan-flunkie like Spawn ain't gonna do much that the Surfer hasn't overcome before.

VS. DR. STRANGE: Dr. Strange is a human conduit of magic with human frailties, while the Surfer can stand at the center of a supernova without breaking a sweat. It might take a couple of hours, but Strange would burn himself out trying to dent the Surfer.

VS. FLASH: Sorry, the Surfer is faster than the Flash, with the power of the universe at his command. Once you take away his speed, Wally is just a guy. G'night, Wally.

VS. WONDER WOMAN: Diana may be a better fighter, but the Surfer is faster, tougher and more powerful. Ten bucks says Wonder Woman's bracelets aren't up to deflecting the power cosmic.

VS. SUPERMAN: While Supes might land a couple of blows as the Surfer is trying to talk to him, our bald buddy Norrin could either hammer Supes into submission with the power cosmic or suck all the solar energy out of him with his energy manipulation powers.

VS. THOR: Surfer's power cosmic is fairly evenly matched with Mjolnir (whose magical properties aren't affected by the universe's laws of physics), which would absorb/deflect Surfer's power for a while. While Surfer couldn't do much physical damage to Thor, Thor would hammer the Surfer unconscious…if he could hit 'im. And even though Mjolnir could block Surfer's powerful blasts, some would eventually land. As the battle progressed, more and more of the Surfer's blows would connect until one super-blast of the power cosmic would put the Odinson down for the count.

And the worst part? The Surfer, one of the most noble spirits in the universe, would search the rubble after the fight, grab Mjolnir and head off to Disneyworld.

With their sweaty guts and hairy backs, the only superheroes the Wizard staffers could beat are the Newsboy Legion, but they'd beat those dirty newsboys half to death.

SLOPPY SECONDS

What follows are the 10 superheroes who, regardless of the fact that they can move planets, shatter continents or punch holes in moons, didn't make the cut. Here's why.

Captain Marvel

Though he could score with all of his friends' moms, Billy Batson's just a kid, with his immaturity being his weakness in battle.

Gladiator

This Imperial Guard's powers stem from self-confidence. Soooo…when banging out with the likes of Silver Surfer and Superman, your self-confidence means the big doughnut.

Green Lantern

Sure, he wields the most powerful weapon in the universe—but he's only had it for a short while. Given time, Kyle will someday make this list.

Invisible Woman

She'd give the Hulk a run for his money, but between his toughness, earthquake-generating slams and near-Superman level strength, he beats her in the long run.

Iron Man

The smart, cunning Hulk just edged Buckethead off of the charts.

Lobo

He's wooooay too stupid to beat any of the names on the list.

Martian Manhunter

Too vulnerable to fire! A stray flame ignited in battle could distract J'onn just long enough for his opponent to k.o. him.

She-Hulk

She's nowhere near as powerful as the Hulk (and he only ranked #10).

Thing

The Hulk has kicked Ben Grimm's craggy ass so many times, we're surprised ol' Jade Jaws isn't an honorary member of the Yancy Street Gang.

X-Man

What is he, 12? This guy has less experience than that lame Carrie Kelly wannabe Bucky from "Heroes Reborn."

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Veteran writer Loeb rolls with the punches after being yanked from 'Captain America' and 'Avengers'

WIZARD Q&A

Jeph Loeb

BY MATTHEW SENREICH • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT BECK

To Hollywood producer Jeph Loeb, writing "Heroes Reborn" is like working on a TV show gone horribly wrong. As opposed to a TV network ordering 13 episodes of a show, Marvel Comics contracted 12 issues of *Iron Man* and *Fantastic Four* to be produced by Jim Lee and 12 issues of *Captain America* and *Avengers* produced by Rob Liefeld. Loeb was Liefeld's head writer.

But like any TV show subject to cancellation, so was Liefeld's contract. Citing low sales, Marvel recently terminated Liefeld's deal with issue #6 of both titles, handing them over to Lee, who will use new writers. (Ironically, Loeb will continue to write Lee's *Iron Man*.)

"It was heartbreaking," says Loeb of this development. "But I was part of the biggest storyline of the year, and with that comes controversy and an element of risk. And Rob made it clear from the beginning that the way the deal was structured, Marvel could pull the plug at any time."

A 17-year film producer/screenwriter, Loeb entered the comic book scene rather quietly in 1991, writing DC Comics *Challengers of the Unknown* mini-series with artist Tim Sale. From there, the pair collaborated on a trio of successful *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight Halloween Specials* that were spun off into a special holiday-oriented maxi-series, the 13-issue *Batman: The Long Halloween*.

Loeb s Batman work caught the attention of Marvel s X-Men editors, which led to writing stints on *X-Force*, *Cable*, *X-Man* and a *Wolverine/Gambit* mini-series. Then Loeb began writing *Captain America*, *Avengers* and *Iron Man*.

Only days after Marvel terminated Liefeld s Heroes Reborn deal, *Wizard* caught up with Loeb to talk about his involvement with Heroes Reborn and other projects.

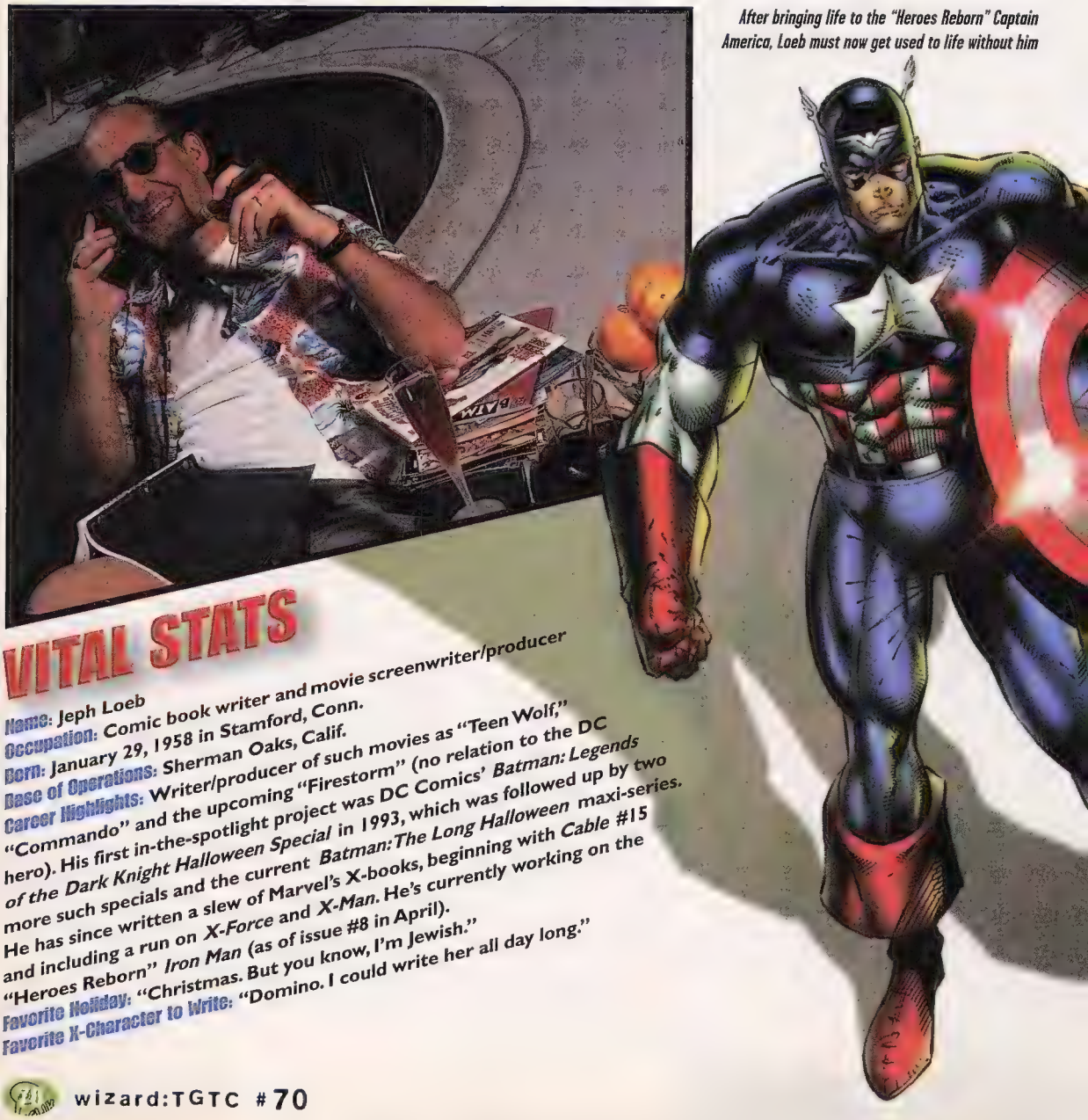
WIZARD: How would you explain what happened with *Captain America* and *Avengers*?

JEPH LOEB: Near as I can tell, a business decision was made between Marvel and Rob [Liefeld]. I don't know that anybody really understands that the people [at Marvel] who originally made the "Heroes Reborn" deal with Jim [Lee] and Rob were no longer at the company by the time the first issues of all the "Heroes Reborn" titles had shipped. After Marvel terminated the agreement, they then tried to renegotiate [Liefeld's portion of the "Heroes Reborn" deal]. I was not part of those negotiations, so I don't know what went on during them, but I think it was a little unusual to terminate [someone] for low sales and then open up negotiations again. It's like firing your best baseball player during his best year, and then calling him back the next day to make a new contract under new terms.

What was your reaction when you heard about Rob being terminated?

I was stunned. We had done what we had set out to do, which was to increase sales on the books. It seemed to us that we were doing a good job. People seemed happy with the "Industrial Revolution" storyline [which ran through the sixth issues of all four "Heroes Reborn" titles]. But when we started looking at the second half—the last six issues of "Heroes Reborn"—[Rob's contract with Marvel] fell apart.

It was just an unusual coincidence that I had picked up the writing job for *Iron Man* two weeks before. When Scott [Lobdell, *Iron Man* writer] decided to leave *Iron Man*, he recommended me to Jim [Lee]. Jim talked to me about it, but before I took the job, I talked to Rob. There was a friendly rivalry between Jim and Rob, and I just wanted to make sure that Rob was okay with me on *Iron Man*. At the time I was offered *Iron Man*, Iron Man was coming to the Avengers and the entire ["Heroes Reborn"] story was all very blended. Rob's feeling was that if I was on *Iron Man*, it would



After bringing life to the "Heroes Reborn" Captain America, Loeb must now get used to life without him

VITAL STATS

Name: Jeph Loeb
Occupation: Comic book writer and movie screenwriter/producer
Born: January 29, 1958 in Stamford, Conn.
Base of Operations: Sherman Oaks, Calif.
Career Highlights: Writer/producer of such movies as "Teen Wolf," "Commando" and the upcoming "Firestorm" (no relation to the DC hero). His first in-the-spotlight project was DC Comics' *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight Halloween Special* in 1993, which was followed up by two more such specials and the current *Batman: The Long Halloween* maxi-series. He has since written a slew of Marvel's X-books, beginning with *Cable* #15 and including a run on *X-Force* and *X-Man*. He's currently working on the "Heroes Reborn" *Iron Man* (as of issue #8 in April).
Favorite Holiday: "Christmas. But you know, I'm Jewish."
Favorite X-Character to Write: "Domino. I could write her all day long."

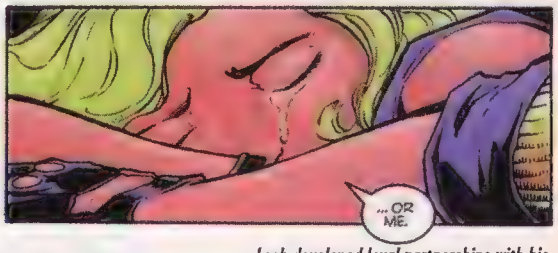
make the second half [of "Heroes Reborn"] go much smoother, since we were all working towards the same goal of issue #12. That all changed. Everything then became confusing, particularly for me, because one day, I was writing three of four of the books. The next day, Rob called, explained that Marvel terminated him, and to my knowledge I was off *Cap* and *Avengers* with him. Then Jim got the books and called me, asking me to stay on writing *Captain America* with no artist mentioned, and also asking whether Ian [Churchill] and I would stay on *Avengers*. I was in an awkward place now. I was most concerned about Rob. I talked to him about it and he was very generous. He said that what was best for the books was for me to continue. But I ended up declining.

You had Rob's blessing; why did you decline?

If you look at the relationships I forged with the people I've worked with in comics, it's always been a partnership. The best way to explain it is that if DC was to say that I could stay on *Batman: The Long Halloween*, but Tim [Sale, the series' artist] had to go, I wouldn't even think about it; I would not continue. Tim is my partner and is as much a part of the creative process as I am.

Rob gave me an enormous break by putting me on two very high-profile books, and they were Rob's show. I don't think everyone knows that it was Rob's show, and I was a part of [it]. At the end of the day, the books were going to continue, but I owed a certain amount of loyalty and respect to what Rob's work was. It becomes a partnership. It's true with Adam Pollina on *X-Force*, Ian Churchill on *Cable*. It's just the way I work.

Jim was terrific about it, and he and I decided that I was to continue on *Iron Man*.



Loeb developed loyal partnerships with his co-creators as he jumped from X-Force *(above) with penciler Adam Pollina to Liefeld's* Avengers

Does your loyalty to Rob make your current Iron Man assignment with Jim Lee uncomfortable?

Not at all. I wouldn't have taken *Iron Man* without Rob being supportive of it at the beginning. I offered Jim the option of me bowing out of *Iron Man*, and he didn't see any reason for that. I've been asked this question by a lot of people: Does this whole scenario with Rob mean I won't work with Jim or Marvel ever again? I don't think anyone understands that my feelings about this are specific to this specific situation. In my background of working in film, I've seen this happen a lot. Sometimes movies replace their director, their actors, their writers. I don't know if people in comics work that way, because the teams change so often, but I work that way. And it works for me. I remain loyal to my partners.

How do you feel about leaving *Captain America* and *Avengers*?

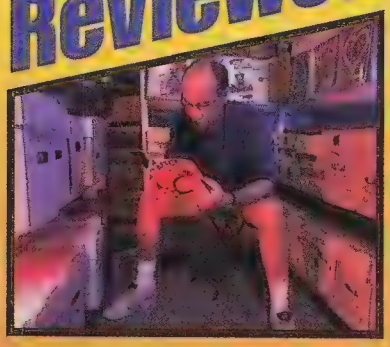
As Rob and I said from the beginning, we would make the transition as smooth as possible. There are certain things about the decision that I feel sad about. I miss Bucky. I left Ant-Man inside the Vision. But one of the things I learned when I left *Cable* and *X-Force* is that the world goes on and other writers come along. I don't know what James [Robinson, the new writer of *Captain America*] and Walt [Simonson, the new writer of *Avengers*] are going to do. I assume that since we're all at the same studio now, we'll be working towards issue #12, the coming of Galactus storyline. I do also know that Rob has generously—and I say generously because Rob's not going be compensated for it—given me permission to share the ideas that he had for the conclusions of the storyline. And Rob's offering to share those ideas is another reason why I decided to do what I did.

I know Rob's a controversial guy, but he's done very right by me. Maybe the next time somebody decides to pick up a bat and bash his brains in, they should read those issues [of *Captain America* and *Avengers* he worked on] and make a determination based on that. If they like the whole run, they should realize it couldn't have happened without Rob.

Now, what do you have in store for *Iron Man*?

Issue #8 will feature the return of Rebel, who was the original Iron Man [in this universe], and theoretically died in the first issue. But no one is ever allowed to die in comics. *Iron Man* #9-#11 will deal with Tony's relationship with Rebel, which began as extremely antagonistic. Now Tony will be righting the wrongs of the past, namely Rebel. We also just found out that Mandarin was in charge of HYDRA all along. And what we find out at the end of issue #11 is that there's someone in charge of the Mandarin, who was nothing more

Heroes Reviewed



WITH HIS DEEP INVOLVEMENT IN THREE OF MARVEL'S FOUR "HEROES REBORN" BOOKS (ALTHOUGH HE'S NOW ONLY ON *IRON MAN*—SEE THE MAIN INTERVIEW FOR THE REASON WHY), WE DECIDED TO ASK WRITER JEPH LOEB TO DISCUSS WHAT HIS FAVORITE HEROES ARE ALL ABOUT.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

"He's a born leader. He's a great foil because he's always so serious and focused on the matter at hand."

IRON MAN

"I like the idea of a man without a heart learning to be a man with a heart, and that's who Tony Stark is."

THOR

"The all-powerful one, the warrior. But I'd love someone to help me write his language."

HULK

"The 'Me am Hulk!' version is the Hulk I love. He's a great, tragic figure; a brilliant man trapped in the body of a monster."

MR. FANTASTIC

"He's the Clark Kent of Marvel. Reed is the guy who is able to understand the Negative Zone, but not able to put on a bow tie."

INVISIBLE WOMAN

"She's very much like Robin the boy hostage in its original conception, but I like the fact that she's become smarter and savvier now, moreso than even the men on the team."

HUMAN TORCH

"He's a total wish fulfillment for fans, because he can 'flame on' his powers and shut them off just like that. Plus, he's cool and sets the definition of cool."

THE THING

"He's a big, lovable, wisecracking guy, but tragic because he looks like a Thing."

DOCTOR DOOM

"His own personal flaw creates him as tragic. What Victor wanted to do was to be more brilliant than anybody else, but what he did was destroy his face, and he came back blaming everybody else for his problem. He's probably the smartest man in the Marvel Universe, but can't get past his own ego in order to make it valuable to him."

HAWKEYE

"He's a mystery man, and all I'll tell you is he's not Bucky Barnes, no matter what anyone tells you." ■ *MS*

than a front for who is in charge of HYDRA and the whole Pacific rim and that world of crime. That person and Iron Man face off in issue #11. And all the #12 issues deal with the coming of Galactus and his heralds, like the Silver Surfer.

What's it like working on *Batman: The Long Halloween*?

Incredible. Batman is a tragic character. The tragedy is he can never make up for the fact that his parents were killed in front of him. He'll never be able to bring his parents back to life, and he believes in his heart that if he can stop crime in Gotham City, it will make up for it. I think that's why the character has endured for so many years, because you feel his pain. He's got the most delicious rogue's gallery of villains. He can be incredibly ruthless, but is also brilliant. And I love the fact that Bruce Wayne is this incredibly tragic man who puts on airs that everything is okay, but is a complete nutcase, because he's putting on this act.

Where did the idea for a 13-issue *Long Halloween* story come from?

I had done a trilogy of Halloween Batman stories before, the first being in 1993. The first story was why there must be a Batman. The second year was what Batman gives up in terms of a family. The last was sort of why there must be a Bruce Wayne. I told all the stories I wanted to tell. Then Archie [Goodwin, editor of *Batman: The Long Halloween*] came to myself and Tim Sale, and gave us the idea about a *film noir* gangster story. Until then, I wasn't going to do another Batman Halloween story, but I thought this was a really cool idea. I talked with Tim about it and we came up with the idea of doing a big event; not just Halloween, but Thanksgiving, New Year's, and so on. Then someone was talking about how "Batman: Year One" [chronicling Batman's first year of crimefighting] ended, so we thought of doing a "Year One" story. Our idea was starting to take shape, and it was looking like I was going

Opposite: The main characters get acquainted in the first issue of Batman: The Long Halloween

to do another Batman Halloween story.

How did it all fall together?

Would you believe I was sitting at home watching the "Beatles Anthology"? Here were four guys who ate together, knew each other's secrets and were best friends, and one day, one of them falls in love with Yoko Ono and brings her into the sessions. A year later, the group breaks up. I was on the phone with Mark Waid after [watching] that, and he had heard about this "Batman: Year One" project Tim and I were working on and made a suggestion. He said that no one had really looked into the friendship between Bruce Wayne, Harvey Dent and Jim Gordon. All of a sudden, a light went on in my head. Here were four men, Commissioner Gordon, District Attorney Harvey Dent, Bruce Wayne and Batman, who trusted each other in a way that the Beatles trusted each other. That was my story: having something happen to that trust. Since Batman, to me, is a really good mystery, and the best mysteries are the ones where the reader is trying to solve it at the same time as the detective, that would be the story. We proposed it as a 13-issue maxi-series asking, "Who is Holiday [the serial killer of *Long Halloween*]?"

So who is Holiday?

[*Laughs*] If you look at pages two and three of issue #1, the Roman's nephew's wedding, every single person in that picture is a suspect. I think Alfred's a suspect. I think Bruce Wayne, even *Batman* is a suspect. If I start limiting it down to a bunch of people, readers will think it'll have to be one of those people. I'd rather let people speculate. This is assuming that we've met Holiday before. Let's just say, if you live in Gotham City, you are a suspect. [*Laughs*]

So it remains a mystery. When *Long Halloween* ends, would you want to do an ongoing Batman book in his current continuity?

I would find it strange doing Batman without Tim [Sale]. It's more about what Tim wants to do. Right now, I have this great synergy between me and Tim. Tim and I created a rhythm back when we were doing *Challengers* together, and it only got better with everything we've done. I'm very loyal to the artists I've worked with. It's like [asking] if I will ever go back to *Cable*. It'd all depend on the situation and the creative team. It'd be weird without Ian [Churchill, Loeb's former penciler on *Cable*].

With *Long Halloween* and your gig on *Iron Man* ending soon, have you lined up any plans for the future? Another Batman Halloween special, perhaps?

I never say never. I thought [1995's] Halloween story was the end of that. The way my life has worked in comics is that things seem to fall into my lap when I least expect it. I may have an idea for a new Halloween project tomorrow. The phone can ring tomorrow with a totally new project. I'm not really concerned about it just yet.

What is your dream project?

I've told everyone since the day I started working in comics that I would quit everything to work on *Fantastic Four*. It only got worse when I wrote *Avengers* #6 with the FF in it. When I think of a dream project, though, I think of it in terms of who I would like to work with, whether it's Tim Sale, Ian Churchill, Jeff Matsuda, Adam Pollina or, heck, I'd love to work with Joe Madureira.

I've been doing movies for 17 years and comics for really only three. I plan to continue to do both movies and comics for a long time to come, and hopefully someday write the FF. It seems that at a time when everyone else in this industry is [acting] like the sky is falling, I'm the guy walking around going, "Hey, isn't that a rainbow over there?"

Wizard Staff Writer Matthew Senreich likes to feed innocent little Jawas to his "Snacktime" (i.e., watch your fingers) Cabbage Patch Kid.

Basic Training

this month's host: Mike Wieringo

How to Draw Spider-Man

I've been drawing comics for myself (and others) since I was 11 years old (I'm 33 now). And in all that time, Spider-Man was always one of my favorites. But he was also the one character that I found the most intimidating to draw! His costume is one of those timeless, beautifully designed outfits that is so distinctive that it's no wonder he's become Marvel's signature icon. So when Marvel editor Ralph Macchio offered me *Sensational Spider-Man* on a monthly basis, I was more than a little apprehensive. Fortunately, over many issues, I've finally found a handle on how I like to draw Spidey! Now, there are certainly a number of different styles to drawing ol' Web-Head, but in the pages that follow, I'm going to show you just how I draw this heroic wall-crawler. So grab a pencil and let's start swingin'!

Heads Up!

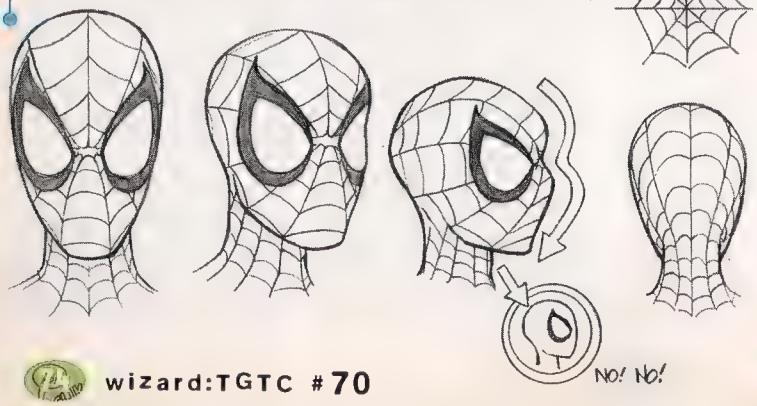
The shape of Spidey's noggin is pretty important. You should practice the basic "egg" shape of Spidey's head (with a little shaved off the sides, and the chin area squared off to keep him looking heroic) before moving on. Be careful not to give him a bullet-head or make his head too top-heavy with not enough chin. I also tend to give him a little added dome up top to add to his quirky, whimsical look.

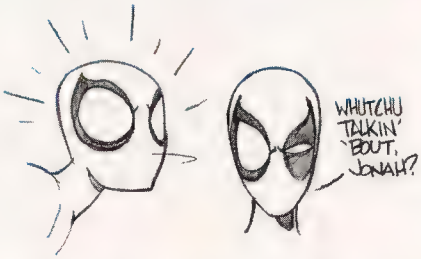
Spidey's eye shape is basically an oval, bisected at an angle with a slight curve to it, for his "buggy" effect (as shown in the middle head at the left). The outer black area of the eye is drawn from the point nearest his nose, following the curve of the eye upward, raising up to a cool point, and then dropping down and following the curve underneath the other side, meeting at the point at his nose again.

Mask-makin' Methods

I've seen lots of different artists draw Spidey, and it seems each one has a different idea of how dense to make the webs on his mask. Personally, I like to keep them simple and open to help define his head and body shape. One rule every artist has to follow, though, is that Spidey's webs emanate from between his eyes and wrap around his head. Think of it as a stylized spider web (kinda like the one I drew here) wrapped around Spidey's face and head.

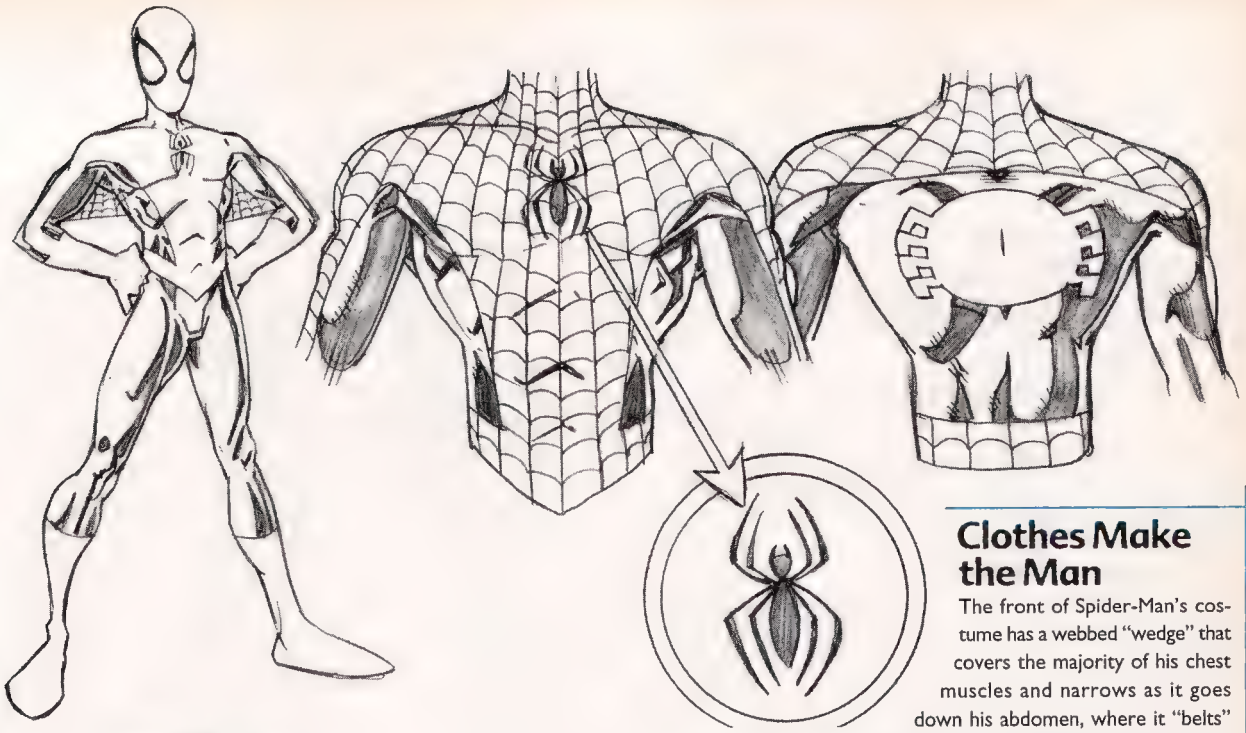
I prefer one line down the middle of his forehead, one line next to the top of each eye and two lines flanking his nose and mouth. Then I throw about three or four somewhat perpendicular lines in between all of those. Again, it's really a stylized thing. Also, make note of Spidey's nose in the profile shots, as I've shown in the third Spidey head below. Just keep practicing till you feel comfortable with how your webs look. And before you know it, Spidey's mask'll be second nature to ya!





You're So Emotional!

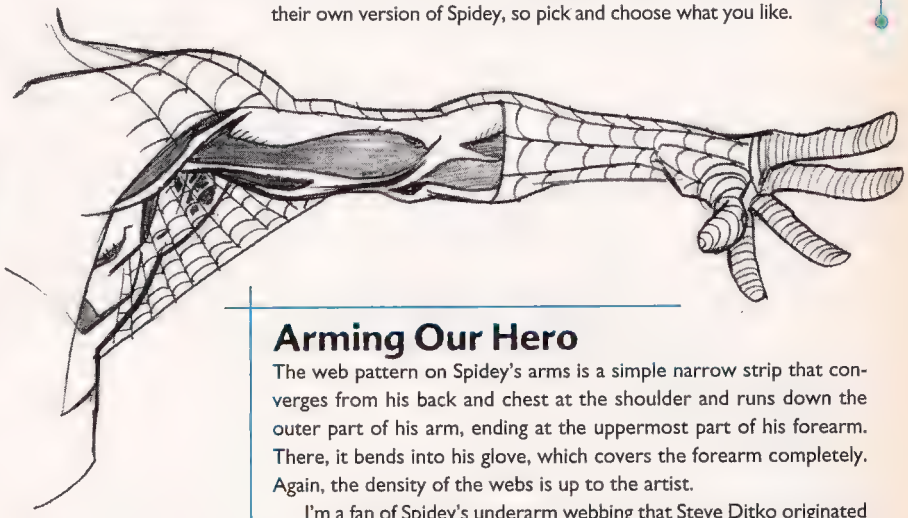
I'm from the "school" of Spidey artists that believes it's okay to manipulate Spidey's eyes to show emotions such as surprise, shock, strain, etc. I'll widen the eyes to almost circles when something startles him, and narrow them to slits when he's suspicious of something, or lifting something that's too heavy for him. Feel free to experiment with Spidey's mask as far as these and any other facial gestures go.



Clothes Make the Man

The front of Spider-Man's costume has a webbed "wedge" that covers the majority of his chest muscles and narrows as it goes down his abdomen, where it "belts" out from there to around his lower back. On his back, the webbed area only covers that lower-back area and the upper part of his back and shoulders. Again, it's up to the individual artist as to how *many* webs they want to draw on Spidey. Whatever you choose, though, make the webs conform to the shape of his body.

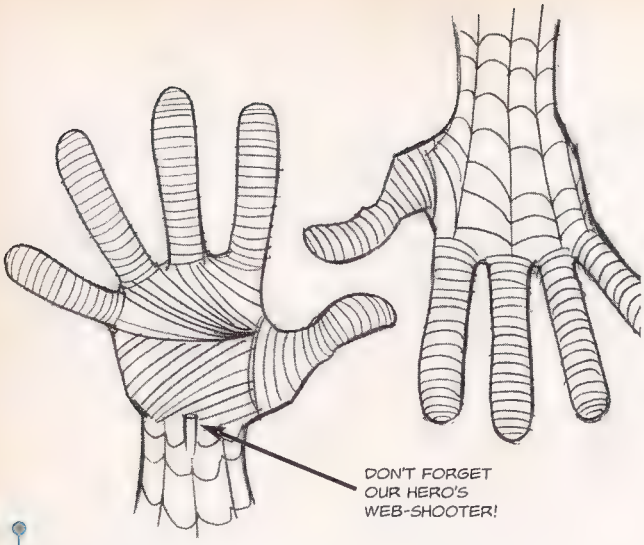
Spider-Man's spider-symbols (small on his chest and big on his back) are very stylized, and up for interpretation. Here, I've shown how I draw them, but I think the *coolest* version of the spider-symbol on Spidey's back is Steve Skroce's in *Amazing Spider-Man*, where the legs taper into a point. It's got a little more of an edge to it and is more menacing-looking. Mine has more of a traditional look. But as I've said, everyone's got their own version of Spidey, so pick and choose what you like.

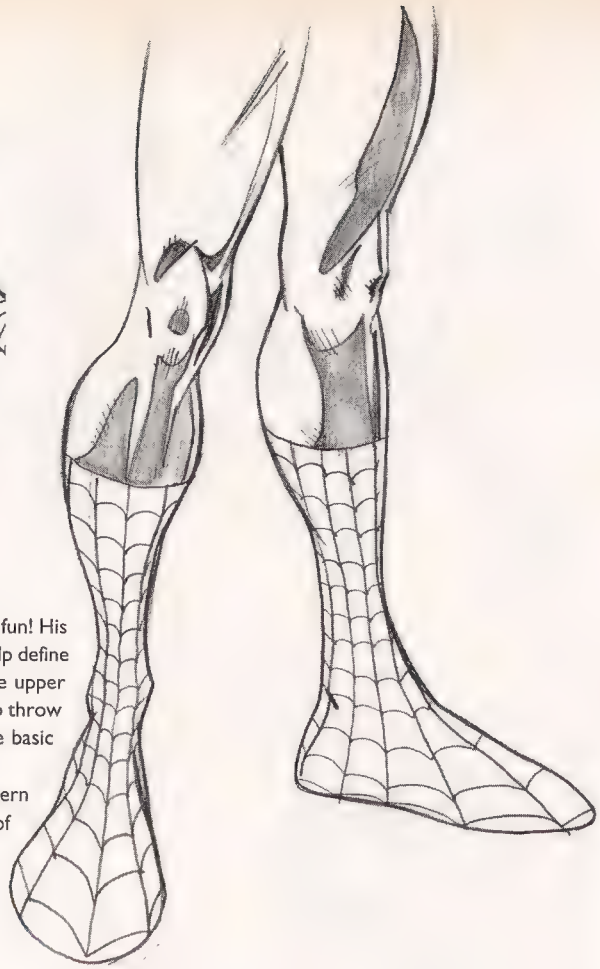


Arming Our Hero

The web pattern on Spidey's arms is a simple narrow strip that converges from his back and chest at the shoulder and runs down the outer part of his arm, ending at the uppermost part of his forearm. There, it bends into his glove, which covers the forearm completely. Again, the density of the webs is up to the artist.

I'm a fan of Spidey's underarm webbing that Steve Ditko originated decades ago, so I like to draw that in whenever the opportunity presents itself!





Hands and Feet

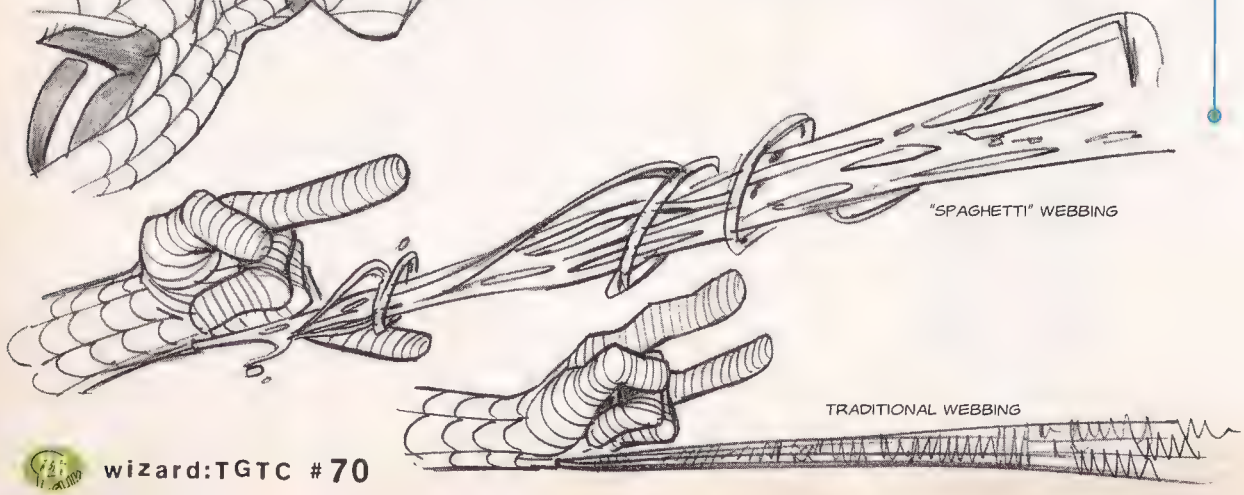
While Spider-Man's gloves are kind of complicated, they're also kinda fun! His fingers are covered with close-set lines that circle around them and help define their shape. The palm also has simple lines that flow one way at the upper part, and then the opposite way at the lower area. And don't forget to throw in that little tube for his web-shooter! The top of the glove has the basic web-pattern that ends at the knuckles, where the finger-lines begin.

Spidey's boots are pretty simple, and the density of the web pattern is (again) up to the artist—just make sure they help define the form of his calves and feet!

Sense and Web-Ability

I like to draw Spidey's "spider-sense" as a connected halo surrounding his head, with jagged "legs" emanating from it. Hopefully, this gives it an arachnid look to mirror his own!

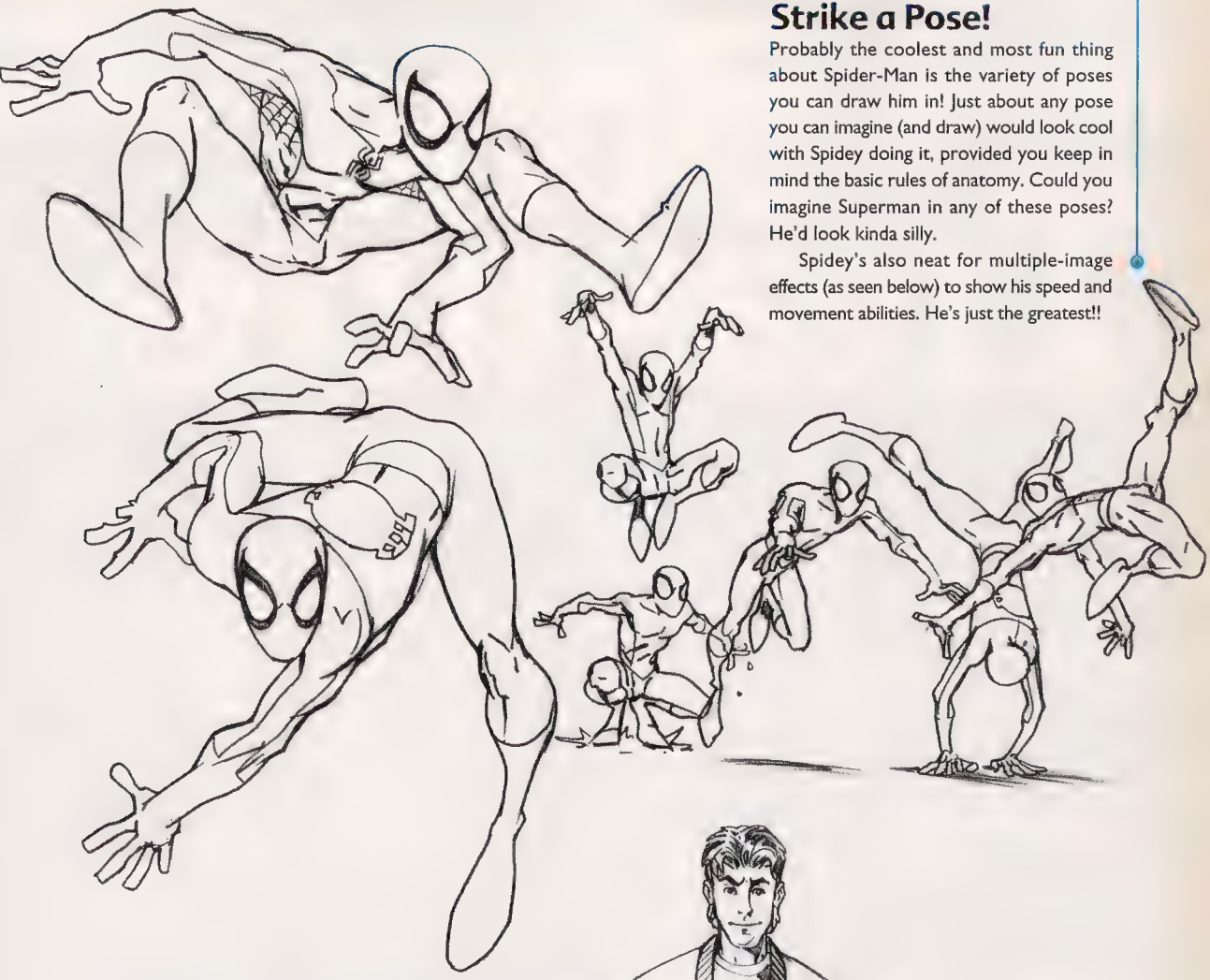
As far as Spidey's web lines go, there's two schools of thought (and I've drawn both types here). One is the way that Todd McFarlane immortalized, with its interweaving strands commonly known now as "spaghetti" webbing. Then there's the more traditional webbing, which, as you can see, is just a bunch of straight lines connected with zig-zags to give it a sort of ladder look. The spaghetti style is a more intertwined, almost wet-like look, that looks kinda like silly string. Just between us, I prefer the "spaghetti" webbing.



Strike a Pose!

Probably the coolest and most fun thing about Spider-Man is the variety of poses you can draw him in! Just about any pose you can imagine (and draw) would look cool with Spidey doing it, provided you keep in mind the basic rules of anatomy. Could you imagine Superman in any of these poses? He'd look kinda silly.

Spidey's also neat for multiple-image effects (as seen below) to show his speed and movement abilities. He's just the greatest!!



He's Only Human

Finally, let's not forget that under that great costume is the guy who wears it. Peter Parker—Mary Jane's problem-laden hubby and J. Jonah Jameson's intrepid photojournalist—is pretty cool in his own right! He's handsome, smooth and witty. It's no wonder MJ fell for him! He's very much an icon of the secret I.D. as Spider-Man is of the superhero! Now, when drawing him, try not to make him look too buff or too studly. He's a nice-lookin' guy, but he shouldn't look like a linebacker. Also, keep him looking youthful by not making his face too angular.

Well, I hope you've enjoyed this study of Spidey's duds as much as I have—and thanks go to the guys at *Wizard* for having me do it! Keep those pencils sharp...and those webs flowing! W

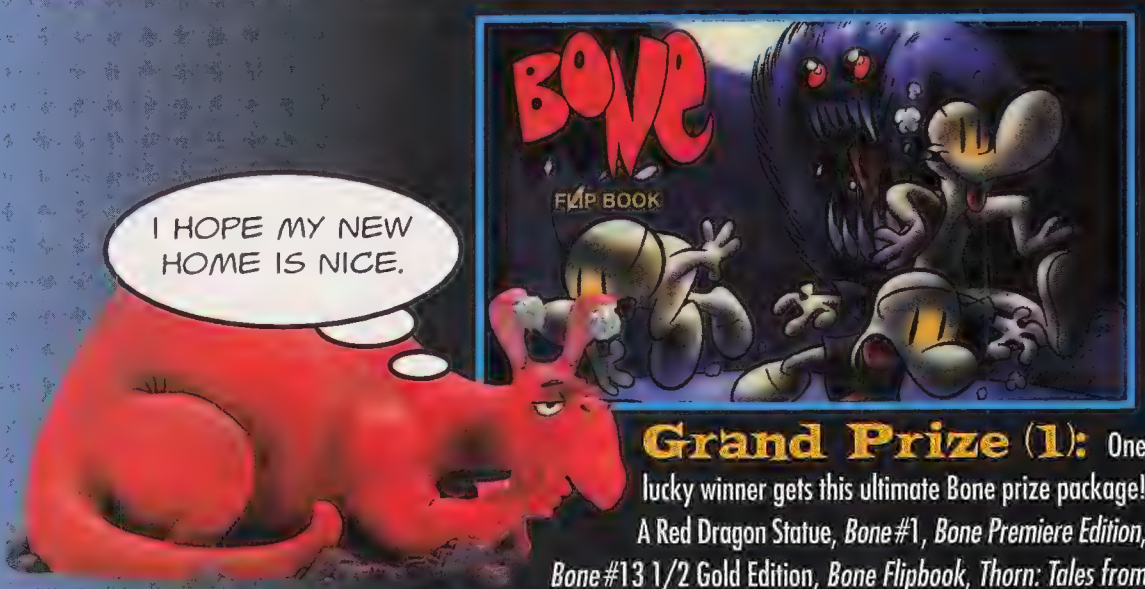
Your friendly neighborhood Mike Wieringo's very own sensationally amazingly spectacular Spider-Man can be seen in the monthly pages of Marvel's The Sensational Spider-Man.

Cartoon Books Presents:

The Bone Treasures Contest

QUICK! CAN YOU NAME TWO THINGS EVERYBODY WOULD LOVE TO HAVE MORE OF? WELL, IF YOU SAID "TREASURE" AND "JEFF SMITH'S BONE," THEN YOU ANSWERED CORRECTLY! AND WITH THIS SUPER-DUPER CONTEST YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WIN BOTH!

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS DRAW WHAT YOU IMAGINE A FEMALE VERSION OF BONE LOOKS LIKE! WHAT COULD BE MORE FUN? ENTRIES SHOULD BE NO LARGER THAN 11" X 17", BUT FEEL FREE TO USE ANY MEDIUM YOU LIKE: CRAYONS, PENCILS, FINGER PAINTS, JELL-O...IT'S YOUR DECISION! BE CREATIVE! BE ORIGINAL! BE WACKY!



Grand Prize (1): One lucky winner gets this ultimate Bone prize package! A Red Dragon Statue, *Bone* #1, *Bone Premiere Edition*, *Bone* #13 1/2 Gold Edition, *Bone Flipbook*, *Thorn: Tales from the Lantern*, Bone Sourcebook (San Diego Edition), Bone PVC, Limited Edition Bone Wall Art, *Wizard Bone* #13 1/2! Ace and *Wizard Bone* #1/2! Wowee!

Second Prize (1): Another lucky reader wins limited edition Bone wall art and four wonderfully fun Bone posters!

CARTOON BOOKS ®

This month's contest is sponsored by Cartoon Books, a bunch of funny characters.

Fill this out, attach it to your drawing, put it an envelope and send to: Bone Treasures, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is June 30, 1997.

Legal Bonage

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Cartoon Books and...and, y'know, them Bone guys are just so damn cute I'm so with so much love we just can't find it within ourselves to cop on anything here. Sorry. Print your name, age, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your drawing. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Bone Treasures Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Sorry, still feelin' too much lovin' to rag on anything. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on or about July 15, 1997. Bone is a registered trademark © Jeff Smith.

For a list of winners available after July 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Bone Treasures Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Bone Treasures Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JUNE 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

THE HEAT IS ON!

ASH 1/2

Summer's still a month or so away—so what better way to feel the heat than by experiencing the scalding power of *Ash*! Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti's creation is a scorching sensation—and now Event Comics and *Wizard* want to make that fire burn a little bit hotter!

Presenting *Ash* #1/2, an all-original, exclusive chapter from the book of everybody's favorite firefighter, Ashley Quinn! And for just 300 cents (that's $3 to you, buddy) you get these sizzling goodies:

- One all-new, all-different Ash story—in *two* different parts by *two* different creative teams! The first is by creator/artist Joe Quesada and writer James Robinson; the second is written by Mark Waid & Brian Augustyn and penciled by Humberto Ramos! Both stories are inked by creator Jimmy Palmiotti! That's *six* great creators in *one* book!
- Did we mention *six* great creators in *one* book?
- Behind-the-scenes sketchbook material! See what goes into the making of this toasty title! Plus, a two-page sneak peek at Rick Leonardi's *Painkiller Jane*!
- And the hottest part of all—this is an *Ash* comic you can't get *anywhere* else on Earth, Heaven or Hell! This exclusive book is available only through this *Wizard* offer. So don't get burned! Send for your copy of *Ash* #1/2 today!

THIS OFFER WON'T LAST FOREVER, BLISTER-BRAINS!

LEGAL BURNS:

[illegible] coupon will be accepted. This coupon must be sent in the accompanying envelope. [illegible] may put additional [illegible] in the same envelope. Coupon is tasty. Remit by [illegible] money order. [illegible] Canadian orders remit $4.00, other foreign orders remit $6.00. All payment [illegible] in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Make all checks payable to Wizard Press. Offer good only [illegible] while supply lasts. Please allow eight to 12 weeks for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Press is [illegible] July 16, 1997. THIS OFFER EXPIRES JULY 16, 1997.

THIS OFFER EXPIRES JULY 16, 1997.

JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

STAR WARS TIES IT ON

If you're going to a job interview at Lucasfilm or a fancy shmancy Star Wars convention (Hey, it could happen!), you'll need a proper tie. Fret not, for Ralph Marlin has created 10 all-new Star Wars ties to bolster its existing 17 designs in the Star Wars collection. This new series includes the famous "Jung Poster Art" image, replicating the classic movie poster used for the original release of "Star Wars." It features Luke Skywalker raising his lightsaber, while Princess Leia clings to his legs. (Geez. That's his sister!) Look for these ties in polyester for $16.99 or silk for $30. And keep an eye out for a pair of Star Wars boxers and a lovely Yoda silk scarf. These items are currently available at J.C. Penney.

BISHOP HITS 20TH CENTURY

By Cyclops' ornery eye! X-Men fans' prayers are finally answered with the release of Creative License's long-awaited Bishop collectible statue. This time-traveling X-Man stands a whopping 12-inches tall with a cool Danger Room background. Sculpted by Ali Coleman (Elektra), the statue is limited to some 2,000 pieces. Bishop, who hits specialty comic shops in May for $250, will supposedly be joined by Logan (a.k.a. Wolverine) and Sabretooth statues later this year, courtesy of Marvel Comics and Creative License. We'll keep you posted!

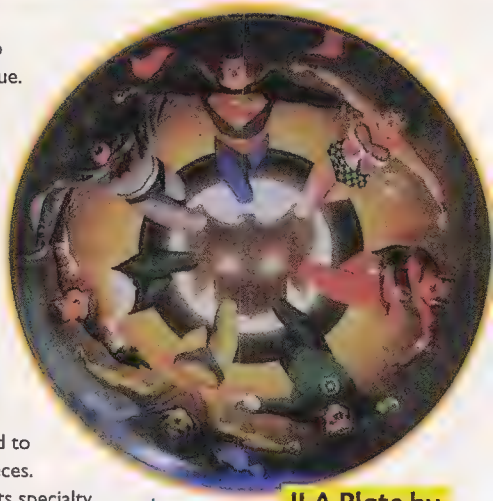
Bishop Statue

BARB WIRE BUSTS OUT

Okay, so "Barb Wire" wasn't exactly the movie hit of 1996. Heck, most people don't even want to rent the thing! But one thing's certain, Pamela Anderson truly did a great job filling out that costume! And now, everyone's favorite sexy mercenary is captured on the Barb Wire Cold Cast Statue. Standing a whopping 15 inches tall, this statue retails for $195 and comes fully painted. Look for it sometime this summer in comic book stores everywhere.

A HEROIC DISH

For a truly super meal, you'll need a plate of epic proportions. Now, Warner Bros. Studio Stores will be giving collectors just that. The original pre-*Crisis on Infinite Earths* seven Justice League of America members (Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, The Flash, Green Lantern, Aquaman and the Martian Manhunter) are captured on this collectible 10 1/2-inch dinner plate featuring painted artwork by *Kingdom Come* artist Alex Ross. You might not want to eat off it, though, since the plates are limited to just 2,500 copies. Pick one up for $35 at your local Warner Bros. Studio Store. For the Warner Bros. Studio Store nearest you, call 1-800-4-WARNER.



JLA Plate by Alex Ross

HEROES IN PEWTER

For those of you looking to decorate your shelves with something *really* cool, check out these awesome 100% pewter figures of your favorite Marvel and DC heroes from all comic book

Product of the Month

BOBA IN BRONZE

Everybody's favorite bounty hunter is back from the Sarlacc's stomach. Dark Horse Comics and Bowen Designs present the Official Star Wars Boba Fett Bronze Statue, individually hand-crafted by Randy Bowen and limited to only 50 sculptures. Yowza! He stands 13 1/2" tall (including the base) and weighs 18 pounds. Boba is mounted on a custom slab of black, Spanish marble with tri-toned patina for his space hardware. A definite collectors item, each individual sculpture is unique and sculpted by Bowen at 1/6 scale. Before you rush out to stores to pick up this puppy, though, be aware that Boba Fett runs for $3,000. So start saving yer pennies and ask your comic book shop dealer for information. And hey, to see how sculptor extraordinaire and all-around super nice guy Randy Bowen actually made this Boba Fett statue, check out the "Model Citizen" feature in *Wizard* #67. For the latest from Bowen Designs, visit the company's website at **http://www.teleport.com/~bowen8r**

eras. Starting in April, Comic Book Champions will release a new pewter figure every eight weeks to retail stores such as Wal-Mart, Kmart, Target and Toys R Us. The first Marvel Comic Book Champions series will include the Golden Age Captain America, Silver Age Spider-Man and Modern Age Hulk. The first DC Comic series will include the Golden Age Superman, Silver Age Joker and Modern Age Batman. Each package contains the pewter sculpture, a full-color replica of an original classic comic book cover featuring that character and a certificate of authenticity. But wait, there's more! Each figure comes affixed to a decorated metal comic book base. These babies, limited to only 30,000 each piece, look really cool and cost only $24.95.

ONE HELL OF A MAGNET

Bowen Designs brings you…the magnet from Hell. That's right, Mike Mignola's popular Hellboy character can now cling faithfully to your fridge through the power of magnetism. This four-inch, fully sculpted (by Randy Bowen, with some help from Mr. Mignola), fully painted little gift from Hell comes with two magnets for your magnetic pleasure. And to display even more of your glorious report cards on your fridge, make sure you pick up Bowen Designs' nifty Grendel magnet, based on Matt Wagners Hunter Rose character. Grendel stands 3 1/2 inches tall and comes fully painted. Both sets should be available in May for $12 each. Ask your comic book dealer for details or write to Bowen Designs directly at P.O. Box 220223, Milwaukie, Oregon 97269 for more information.

Hellboy Magnet

Grendel Magnet

BUSTIN' MADMAN

Snap to it! The ginchiest guy in Snap City (that's Madman to you non-informed) is coming to a head. Shipping in April for a mere $35 is Bowen Designs' Madman bust, sculpted by Randy Bowen himself (with some help from Madman creator Mike Allred). This piece is available for a limited time only, so be sure to reserve your copies now from your local retailer.

SUPER SHIRT

So you want to show up all those pseudo-Superman fans who wear the old Superman logo because they've watched too many Seinfeld episodes? Well, to celebrate the big man's new powers, new costume and new logo, DC Comics brings you the Superman '97 logo T-shirt. This black, 100% cotton shirt

Madman Bust

curvaceous Catwoman, baring claws and kneeling on a concrete wall, surrounded by a few of her feline friends. Limited to 6,000 copies, the statue is sculpted by William Paquet (Swamp Thing) based upon sketches by *Catwoman* artist Jim Balent and carries a $195 price tag.

features Superman's shocking new blue-and-white logo on the front and retails for $15.95. Keep an eye out for it in May at your friendly neighborhood comic shop.

COLD-CAST CATWOMAN

Mwwworrww! Coming this July to a comic store near you is DC's stunning porcelain rendition of Batman's friskiest foe, Catwoman. This statue shows the

Catwoman Statue

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company putting out some easy cheesin' good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like JLA Jigglers, Witchblade batting gloves or Jesse Custer Bibles? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our groovy "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown

Nintendo 64's Second Wave: Are the Games Worth the Wait?

Two major Nintendo 64 titles recently found their way into the highly impregnable *Wizard* video game laboratories. The technical analysis has been digested and the results are indisputable—Nintendo has indeed delivered the goods. *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, and *Shadows of the Empire* are all superior to comparable PlayStation and Saturn games.

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER

MANUFACTURER: ACCLAIM
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $79.99, available now

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter takes after the current Acclaim comic book version of the new Son of Stone. The "real" Turok has retired and Joshua Fireseed has assumed the mantle of Earth's protector. He's also the star of this difficult *DOOM*-clone. *Turok* features a first-person perspective, winding 3-D environment and a slew of weapons ranging from the mundane to the highly explosive. *Turok's* got all the *DOOM* clichés down pat.

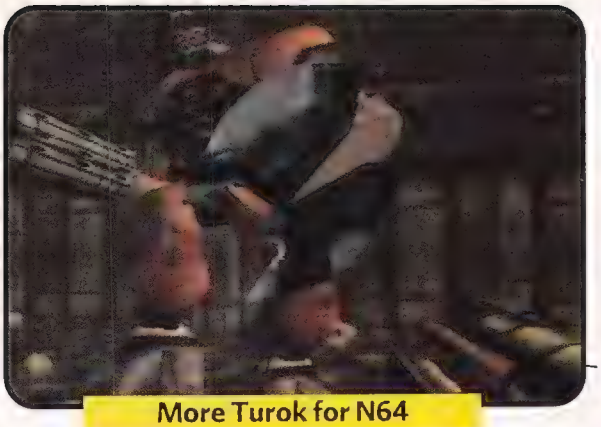
Despite the fact that *Turok* is completely derivative, it heaps on the polish and winds up as a superior entity—better weapons, fiercer enemies and lush graphics set *Turok* apart from the pack of first-person shooters. The game also sports some of the most radical nuclear explosion effects ever seen. *Turok* simply out*DOOM*s *DOOM*.

The game offers players an interesting twist in the area of control: Turok's movement is controlled by the four camera buttons, while the analog joystick controls aiming and the camera's view. This configuration seems odd at first, but you soon grow accustomed to the game's setup.

We have one beef, though: as the user progresses through the game, way too much jumping is required to see Turok through to the end. Game designers take note: with no sense of perspective (these games are not *really* in 3-D), timing a jump can be quite frustrating and detracts from gameplay. We suggest laying off the many leaping tests and focusing more on dino-destruction and intricate storylines.

Turok's goals are overly simple: collect the game's keys to progress through eight levels. Players must also explore the "Lost Land" and pick up hidden pieces of the Chronoscepter. This Chronoscepter is (What else?) an apparatus of ultimate

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter



More Turok for N64

destruction and a potent weapon against the end boss, the evil Campaigner. The Chronoscepter also happens to be the coolest weapon in the history of video games—it creates tears in the fabric of time.

Acclaim has finally come up with a fun, action-packed game, as *Turok* is definitely worth its hefty price tag.

And to make this cool game even cooler, we've unearthed the most powerful cheat code available. Enabling this cheat code gives a player unlimited ammo, invincibility and full access to all the weapons. At the main options screen, simply punch in RBNSMTH, and go to cheat menu to install.

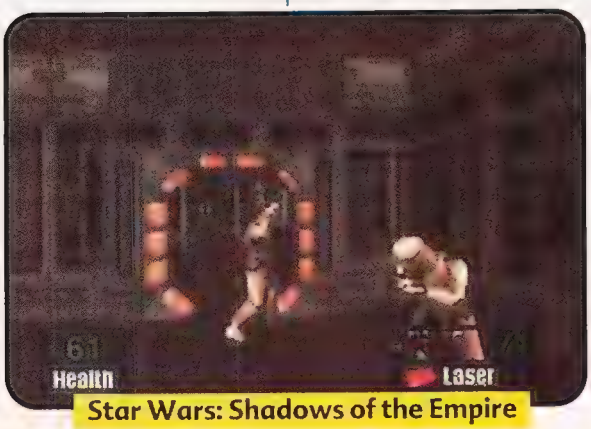
SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE

MANUFACTURER: LucasArts/Nintendo
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $79.99, available now

We've covered *Shadows of the Empire* extensively in past columns, but have only now received a finished version to review. *Shadows* had a limited holiday release, resulting in desperate parents shelling out

$200 for a copy. Nintendo will probably wind up overproducing this cartridge, and it will be readily available used—so if you have some patience, you can probably save yourself forty bucks or so.

The finished version of *Shadows* was identical to the beta copy we sampled earlier. Despite *Shadows* being a great game, it nonetheless suffers in comparison to *Turok*. *Shadows*' first level is one of the most perfectly executed sequences in all of video gaming—a wonderful recreation of the Hoth AT-AT battle (from "The Empire Strikes Back"), which puts the player at the helm of a Rebel Snowspeeder. Sadly, after the first level, *Shadows* goes into a first-person shooter mode that is entertaining, but is definitely no *Turok*.



Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire

THE TOY CHEST

THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS

The Bat is back...and this time he's brought along a few friends.

With **"Batman & Robin"** all set to rock theaters this summer, Kenner is gearing up to release a whole slew of new Bat-product to celebrate this fourth Batman film in the mega-popular Warner Bros. franchise.

And let's not forget Batman: Total Justice, Legends of the Dark Knight and Batman: D.U.O. Force—the rest of Kenner's Caped Crusading lineup. In 1996, Kenner announced it had produced 100 separate Batman figures since securing the Bat-license from DC Comics in 1984. And with all of 1997's releases, that number just may hit the bicentennial mark soon.

BATMAN AND ROBIN

Kenner's action figures based on "Batman & Robin" sport variations on (count 'em) three heroes *and* three villains, with nifty action features and specialized weapons devoted to each. In the basic figure assortment, expect the heroes to include Hover Attack Batman, Heat Scan Batman, Battle Gear Bruce Wayne, Snowtracker Batman,

BY **SCOTT BEATTY**

Iceboard Robin, Razor Skate Robin, Blade Blast Robin and **Batgirl**!

On the side of the villains, look for **Mr. Freeze**, Frost Bite, Iceblast Mr. Freeze, **Jungle Venom Poison Ivy** and **Bane**.

Batman and Robin two-packs will feature variations on the film's heroes and villains, including: Challengers of the Night (Batman & Robin), Battle of Brain vs. Brawn (Batman & Bane) and Nighthunter Robin vs. Evil Entrapment Poison Ivy.

Kenner's Deluxe Action Figure assortments will sport mini-assault vehicles with exclusive figures, including: Roof Pursuit Batman, Glacier Battle Robin, Blast Wing Batman and Ice Terror Mr. Freeze.

For the motorcycle set (vehicles with figures), check out Robin's Redbird Cycle and Batgirl's Ice Strike Cycle. Meanwhile, the Caped Crusader gets *two* nifty vehicles to fight the good fight: a newly designed Batmobile with powerful ice shatter missile and extending vine attack blades, as well as the Iceglow Bathammer with flashing strobe attack and dual meltdown missiles.

And if you're looking for a place that your figures can call their own, just check out the Wayne Manor Batcave Compound which features kick-crash table, breakthrough skylight, computer command console, secret passages and quick-change vault to change Bruce Wayne into Batman! Other Batman and Robin playsets include Mr. Freeze's Ice Fortress with shooting weapons, as well as Freeze's Cryo-Freeze Chamber, with a cryogenic chamber to put the heroes on ice... BRRRRRR!

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT

Picking up where Legends of Batman left off, **Legends of the Dark Knight** also features weird "Elseworlds" versions of Batman and his rogues gallery. However, this line focuses on just one world—a twisted parallel universe controlled by the Dark Knight's freakish foes. Scaled up to 6 1/2 to 7 inches in height, this year's Legends assortment includes Glacier Shield Batman, Bat Attack Batman, Panther Prowl Catwoman and **Laughing Gas Joker**.

Shaq comes to life as Mobile Barrier Steel

MEN OF STEEL

If you think the Dark Knight's got a big year planned, check out what Kenner has in store for that other popular DC Comics superhero...Superman! These days, the Man of Tomorrow is lookin' a little blue with his new costume and powers. However, Kenner's animated **"Superman"**-inspired action figures keep Supey's classic red, yellow and blue union suit intact, with a few action modifications. Though many of the figures have already begun shipping, 1997's remaining assortments will include the following variations on the Man of Steel: Capture Claw Superman, Anti-Kryptonite Superman, Fortress of Solitude Superman, Strong Arm Superman, **Supergirl** (WHOO-HOO!), Capture Cape Superman, **Metallo** and **Omega Blast Darkseid**.

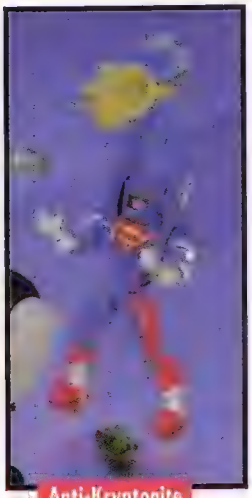
Deluxe Figure Assortments will include City Camo Superman and Techno Armor Superman.

And finally, the **Superman Animated Space Pod**—the spaceship that brought Superman to Earth—includes a deployable capture claw, launching deep-space probe and pop-out wings for hyper-space travel.

While Super-fans eagerly await a new Superman feature film (already in the works), NBA star Shaquille O'Neal jumps into theaters as DC Comics' other Man of Steel...**"Steel"**! In support of the film, Kenner's new action figure line features characters and power accessories. Keep your eyes peeled for **Steel** (a.k.a. John Henry Irons), Armor Up Steel, Power Gauntlet Steel, Vapor Trail Steel, Lt. Sparks and Shell Shock Burke. Deluxe figures will include Electromagnetic Steel and Mobile Barrier Steel.

And if you're looking for vehicles, the Steel Assault Cycle with Blast Hammer Steel Figure features a blasting "hammer" missile and exclusive Steel figure.

Fortress of Solitude Superman



Anti-Kryptonite Superman

Strong Arm Superman

Omega Blast Darkseid

STAR WARS FUTURES!!

STAR WARS UPDATE

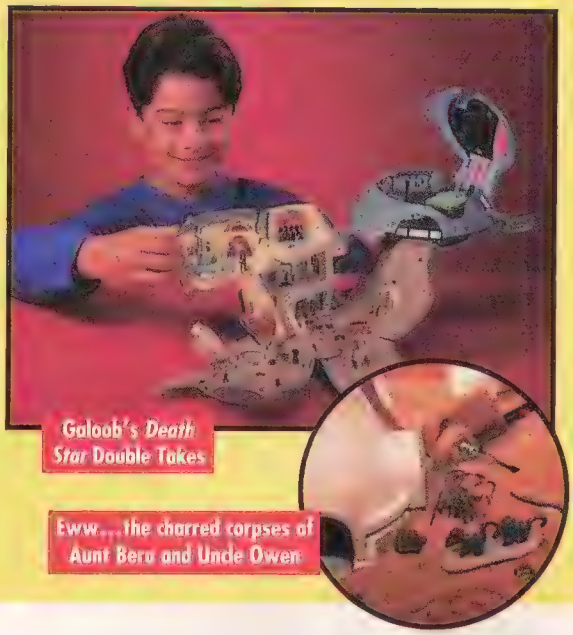
Last month, "Toy Chest" previewed many of Kenner's new **Star Wars: Power of the Force** offerings for 1997. Here's a look at a few of the new action figures and accessories we didn't show: Luke Skywalker in Ceremonial Outfit, Weequay, the deluxe Hoth Rebel Soldier with Anti-Vehicle Laser Gun and the new *Millennium Falcon* Carrycase with exclusive Wedge Antilles Figure!

Millennium Falcon Carrycase
Wedge Antilles
Hoth Rebel Soldier with Anti-Vehicle Gun
Weequay
Luke Skywalker in Ceremonial Outfit

GALOOB'S LI'L FORCES

Awarded the distinction of "Licensee of the Year" in 1996 for its Star Wars toys, Galoob celebrates the 20th anniversary of Star Wars in 1997 with the release of two exciting playsets utilizing its Double Takes technology. First up is ***Death Star* Double Takes**, a basketball-sized replica of the dreaded Imperial Battle Station, which unfolds to reveal various "Star Wars: A New Hope" scenes set on Tatooine, including the Mos Eisley Cantina and the Lars Homestead, which features a "flip-over" sand patch with the charred corpses of Aunt Beru and Uncle Owen. You asked for 'em, and you got 'em, kiddies! The playset comes with moving features, five authentic figures and the *Millennium Falcon*—all packaged in a box featuring new cover art by Ralph McQuarrie, the concept artist who brought much of the Star Wars Universe to life.

Similarly, McQuarrie contributes cover art to the **Yavin Rebel Base**, a playset with fold-out hangar, starfighters and working cargo crane, simulating the final battle scene from "Star Wars: A New Hope."


Galoob's *Death Star* Double Takes
Eww...the charred corpses of Aunt Beru and Uncle Owen

Trek 9-inchers will include (L. to r.): Dr. Bashir, Odo, Lt. Tuvok, Capt. Janeway, Commander Chakotay, Lt. Paris, Doc and Ensign Kim

From left: Commander Riker, Lt. Commander Worf, Captain Picard and the Borg head up Star Trek: Combat Action

Left to right: Edith Keeler, Captain Crusher, Koloth, Ilia, Dax in Dress Uniform, Leeta and Sisko as Klingon

Left to right: Harry Mudd, Gorn, Kurn, Kirk from "The Tholian Web," McCoy in Dress Uniform, Crusher from "Generations," Professor Data, Captain Sisko, Mugatu, Paris from "Thresholds" and Sesko as Cardassian

NEW TREK!

Playmates continues its mega-popular Star Trek lines with a new addition, **Star Trek: Combat Action**—6-inch figures with spring-activated action features. The lineup includes: Commander Riker (w/ Phaser Draw Action and Firing Phaser Rifle), Lt. Commander Worf (w/ Bat'telh Combat Action and Firing Klingon Rifle), Captain Picard (w/ Fencing Action and Firing Phaser Rifle), the Borg (w/ Firing Arm and Mechanical Grab Action) and Q (w/ Fencing Action and Firing Musket).

1997's standard 5-inch Star Trek assortments will include a variety of classic and recent Trek characters, including: **Edith Keeler** (Joan Collins from "City on the Edge of Forever"), Captain Crusher, Koloth, Ilia, Dax in Dress Uniform, Leeta, Sisko as Klingon, **Harry Mudd**, Gorn, Kurn, Kirk from "The Tholian Web," McCoy in Dress Uniform, Crusher from "Generations," Professor Data, Captain Sisko, Mugatu, Paris from "Thresholds," Seska as Cardassian, Swarm Alien, **Spock from "Mirror, Mirror,"** O'Brien from "Trials and Tribble-ations," Sisko from "Trials and Tribble-ations," Dax from "Trials and Tribble-ations," Odo from "Trials and Tribble-ations," Bashir from "Trials and Tribble-ations," Cadet Troi, Cadet Data and Cadet Crusher.

And finally, the Star Trek: Deep Space Nine and Star Trek: Voyager lines have all-new 9-inch figures in store this year, including: Dr. Julian Bashir, Odo, Lt. Tuvok, Captain Kathryn Janeway, Lt. Tom Paris, Doc, Ensign Harry Kim, Lt. B'Elanna Torres and Commander Chakotay.

ToyFare *Editor Scott Beatty can't believe Lucasfilm changed the Ewok song at the end of "Return of the Jedi: The Special Edition." "Celebrate the Love" had a good beat...and even Lando could dance to it!*

WISH LIST

THE 10 ACTION FIGURES THAT *WIZARD* WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
With 12 new DC/Marvel "shmooshed" characters coming down the pike, we know fans would love to see action figures based on such faves as Super Soldier, Dark Claw, Dr. Strangefate and newcomers Lobo the Duck and Iron Lantern!

2) "New" X-Men Boxed Set (X-Men)
Now that Toy Biz is finally series on the classic mutants, we can't wait for a retro-boxed set of Sunfire, Banshee, Thunderbird, Storm, Nightcrawler & Colossus, the all-new "international" X-team that debuted in *Giant Size X-Men #1*.

3) Gen[13] (WildStorm)
WildStorm's frantic teens, as follows: "Freefall with gunker out fit change (hubba!), Grunchild w/ breakaway student clothes (double hubba!), Rainmaker w/ light up eyes and snap-on energy bolts (hubba! hubba! hubba!), Burnout w/ light-up hands and light up, snap-on flame-tools and Grunge w/ interchangeable "absorbed" cows.

4) Blink (X-Men)
Sweet Christmas, Toy Biz! Make this popular mutant-girl from "Age of Apocalypse"—so the letters I stop! Give her static cling "teleport" portals and removable energy javelins...and make the madness stop!

5) X-Man (X-Men)
Oh yeah, Biz, while you're at it, serve up this ultra-popular mutant-brand Cable in 3-inch-scale on IK blasts, cause he's also more popular than "Baywatch." And that's saying something!

6) Nightwing (Total Justice)
Now that writer Chuck Dixon's set up Dick Grayson in new digs with a new outlook on life (and minus that stupid pony-tail), he's cooler than cool. Give him Batarangs, truncheon sticks and a retractable jump line and he's ready to go!

7) Lobo (Superman Animated)
The bestest episode of the new "Superman" animated series featured everybody's favorite bounty hunter Bo, so we're eagerly awaiting an animated-style figure with hook, chains and the last Czarnian's custom space-hog.

8) Martian Manhunter (Total Justice)
Whaddaya say, Kenner? How about the perennial Justice leaguer with snap-on "Martian vision" blasts and his true Martian form (trend: Gumby) inside a trap door in his back?

9) Toad (X-Men)
The former oft toady of Magneto and founding member of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, would come with crouch-and-jump action that works, unlike the non-working crouch-and-jump of Toy Biz's Beast.

10) Cobra (Spider-Man)
Ball-jointed like super-poseable Spidey, this classic Spider-Man villain would have all the right malleable moves to bend around corners to take down the Web-Head. Plus, we'd give him some keen venom-twist rockets.

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

HOMEMADE HEROES

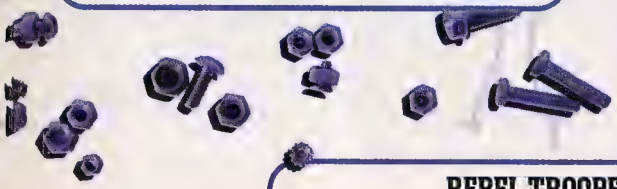
THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials, and each of the truly talented creators will receive two copies of *Groo the Wanderer*, signed by Sergio Aragonés. The Runner-Up will receive four signed-by-Sergio Groo comics, and the Grand Prize Winner runs away with the four signed Groo books, plus a Groo Cheese Dip statue! Fantastic work, folks!

Thanks a bunch to the folks at Graphitti Designs for the spiffy prize!

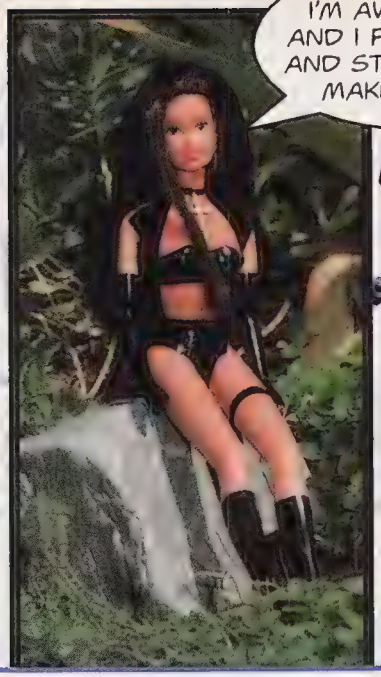
GRAND PRIZE

BRUCE WAYNE: AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.
Carlos Flores of San Antonio, Texas
This Bruce Wayne, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. became reality when Carlos amalgamized a Toy Biz Spy Wolverine figure with a Punisher figure's trench coat. And kudos to Carlos for a neat packaging job!



RUNNER-UP

REBEL TROOPER
Chad Zalud of Elgin, Ill.
Chad repainted a Han Solo (Star Wars: POTF) and produced the helmet from clay to create this Rebel Trooper (who was scanning the skies above Yavin 4). And don't these Rebel Trooper guys have some of the coolest outfits in the "Star Wars Trilogy"?



AVENGELYNE
Jonathan Yuan of Rowland Heights, Calif.

Don't let the innocence of this Barbie doll fool you. Jonathan added some black paint, vinyl, embroidery floss, pins and a brass cross charm to a Mattel Pretty Hearts Barbie, creating a peachy Avengelyne who could kick your butt, our butts and even Rob Liefeld's butt.

RORSCHACH AND DR. MANHATTAN
Matt J. Britton of Burbank, Calif.

Dr. Manhattan features a repainted Toy Biz Gideon head on a Spider-Man body, while Rorschach is a truly weird meld of a Spidey head, a Light-Up Gambit's body and a painted Tylenol capsule glued to The Night Man's gun. Talk about your headaches (ahem).

VAMPIRELLA
Timothy Kauszler of Newport News, Va.

Hubba hubba! Vampirella sucked the life out of a Playmates Voodoo figure to take the form of this fine-lookin' rendition of Harris Comics' brave beauty. And again, the packaging job doesn't, er, suck. (Get it?)

BLACK PANTHER
Rhea T. Vanarsdall of Lakeland, Fla.

A repainted Toy Biz ball-jointed Spider-Man figure, the Black Panther looks ready to join the hunt for an actual Toy Biz action figure of himself.

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

The Next 'Calvin & Hobbes'?

Frank Cho's lush and lively 'Liberty Meadows' comic strip is coming to a newspaper near you

Is your daily newspaper looking a little drab and boring now that great cartoons like "Calvin & Hobbes," "Bloom County" and "The Far Side" have faded into oblivion? Well, the only thing left for you to do is beg your local rag to start running Frank Cho's "Liberty Meadows." Cho has the potential to single-handedly bring striking visuals, intelligent writing and beautiful characters back to the comic strip world.

Cho, a 25-year-old Baltimore resident and self-taught artist, has managed to start a comic strip that has all the charm, wit and superb drawing of memorable strips like "Calvin & Hobbes" and the others mentioned above. Realistically rendered humans mix with off-the-wall animals at Liberty Meadows, an animal sanctuary for creatures who have lost their natural habitats. The animals—who speak and act very much like humans—are taken care of by Brandy, a beautiful animal psychologist, and Frank, a neurotic animal doctor who happens to have the hots for his co-worker. The goofy gang of animals they look after includes Ralph, a mischievous midget bear, his partner-in-crime Leslie (a bullfrog), an innocent duckling named Truman, and Dean, the embodiment of a chauvinist pig who Cho claims is based on his roommate.

Most of these characters first appeared in one form or another in "University^2," Cho's college strip from the University of Maryland's daily paper, *The Diamondback*. The strip was an instant success, due to Cho's deft mixing of zany college pranks (like beer guzzling and projectile vomiting) and the honestly written humorous relationship between Brandy and Frank (who began in "University^2" as a duck). After quickly developing a cult following, Cho went on to win the Best College Cartoonist award from the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Charles Schulz Plaque for Excellence in Cartooning. After graduating, Cho self-published *University^2—The Angry Years*, a paperback collection of the strip's three-semester run that sold surprisingly well. "I had a couple of book signings on campus and people were standing in line for three hours to get a signature," Cho recalls. "I never knew I was that popular."

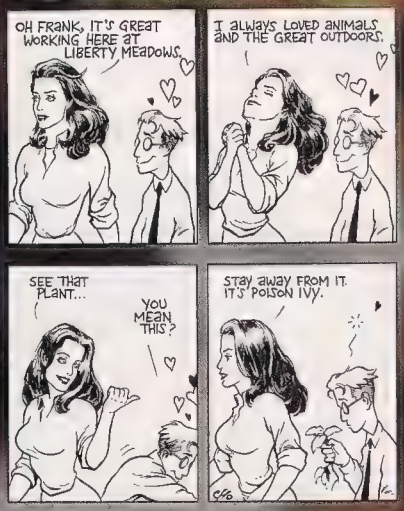
The transition from college success to nationally syndicated strip involved a few cosmetic changes. Y'see, Cho likes to draw beautiful women. But it just so happens his women are a little too beautiful for the general public. "The syndicate's big concern was Brandy's cup size," Cho claims. "Basically they told me to make her less voluptuous and curvaceous. I submitted the first couple of weeks and they sent most of it back with little Post-it notes pointing to Brandy saying, 'Reduce breasts and buttocks.' It was so weird. Obviously they haven't seen 'Blondie,' because Blondie is stacked."

It took Cho a few tries to find a syndicate (which is a company that sells and distributes comic strips to newspapers) that would accept his work. Most of the major syndicates rejected his proposal for "Liberty Meadows" because the humor was deemed "too aggressive and too fresh." But it was just those qualities that brought him to the attention of the Creators Syndicate (even if they did have problems with the anatomical gifts of his characters). "They thought it was aggressive, fresh and hip. (Gosh, I hate that word, 'hip.') They sent me a contract within the week."

The strip is off to a respectable start and begins its run on March 31st in a number of big papers like *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Denver Post*, *The Dallas Morning Star* and *The Washington Post*. It's this last paper that makes Cho a little ner-

Just another wacky day for Brandy and her buddies in *Liberty Meadows*

by tom palmer jr.



Above: Love is a very risky proposition in "Liberty Meadows"
Right: Brandy bathes a very lucky Truman

vous. "*The Washington Post* is my hometown newspaper, and I just got word today that they picked me up," Cho explains. "At first, the whole thing didn't hit me because I had signed with papers across the country I would never see. But now that I got word about *The Post*, I'm kinda scared spitless."

Judging by the first few weeks of his strip, Cho has nothing to worry about. "Liberty Meadows," with its beautifully rendered scenery and expressive characters, stands out on a page full of simply drawn gag-a-day strips. And once the strip catches your eye, you'll be hooked when you read one of Cho's perfectly timed jokes. What's the secret behind his can't-miss formula? "Drawing comics is sort of like therapy in one part, because I get all that stuff that I want to get out of me down on paper," Cho explains. "I just want to make people laugh. But I try not to write for people, mostly it's just writing for myself, stuff I want to see in comic strips, things that make me laugh."

Even though Cho is his own audience, "Liberty Meadows" has the potential to quickly develop a loyal following. But to do that, Cho has to take advantage of the stagnant nature of the funnies page. "I think the comic strip industry needs a breath of fresh air," Cho says. "Newspapers need to take a chance on a lot of the new talent out there. There are a lot of funny, well-drawn strips out there, but they won't give these guys a chance because they just stick with the dinosaurs, which is too bad." Let's hope a lot of papers wise up and jump on the "Liberty Meadows" bandwagon. W

Tom Palmer Jr. used to work at an animal sanctuary until he was caught slapping the weasels.

FYI

To get the folks at your paper to carry "Liberty Meadows," you'll have to start writing them a lot of letters. Show them this issue of *Wizard*; maybe it'll get them interested. If you want, you can write to the Creators Syndicate at 5777 West Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045. You can e-mail them at cre8ors@aol.com or check out their Website at http://www.creators.com. Frank Cho still has copies of *University²—The Angry Years*, the paperback collection of his college strips. Copies are just $15 postage paid, so send your order to 12 Angry Monkeys, 7844 Saint Thomas Dr., Baltimore, MD 21236 and make your checks payable to Frank Cho.

Frank Cho's Recommended Reading

"I really enjoy a lot of the small press stuff, because [it's] a lot more creative and much more honest than the mainstream superhero stuff," Cho says. "I guess my tastes are a bit snobbish." Here's a rundown of some of his favorite comics: *Bone* by Jeff Smith, *Akiko* by Mark Crilley, *Milk & Cheese* by Evan Dorkin, *Schizo* by Ivan Brunetti and *Xenozoic Tales* by Mark Schultz.

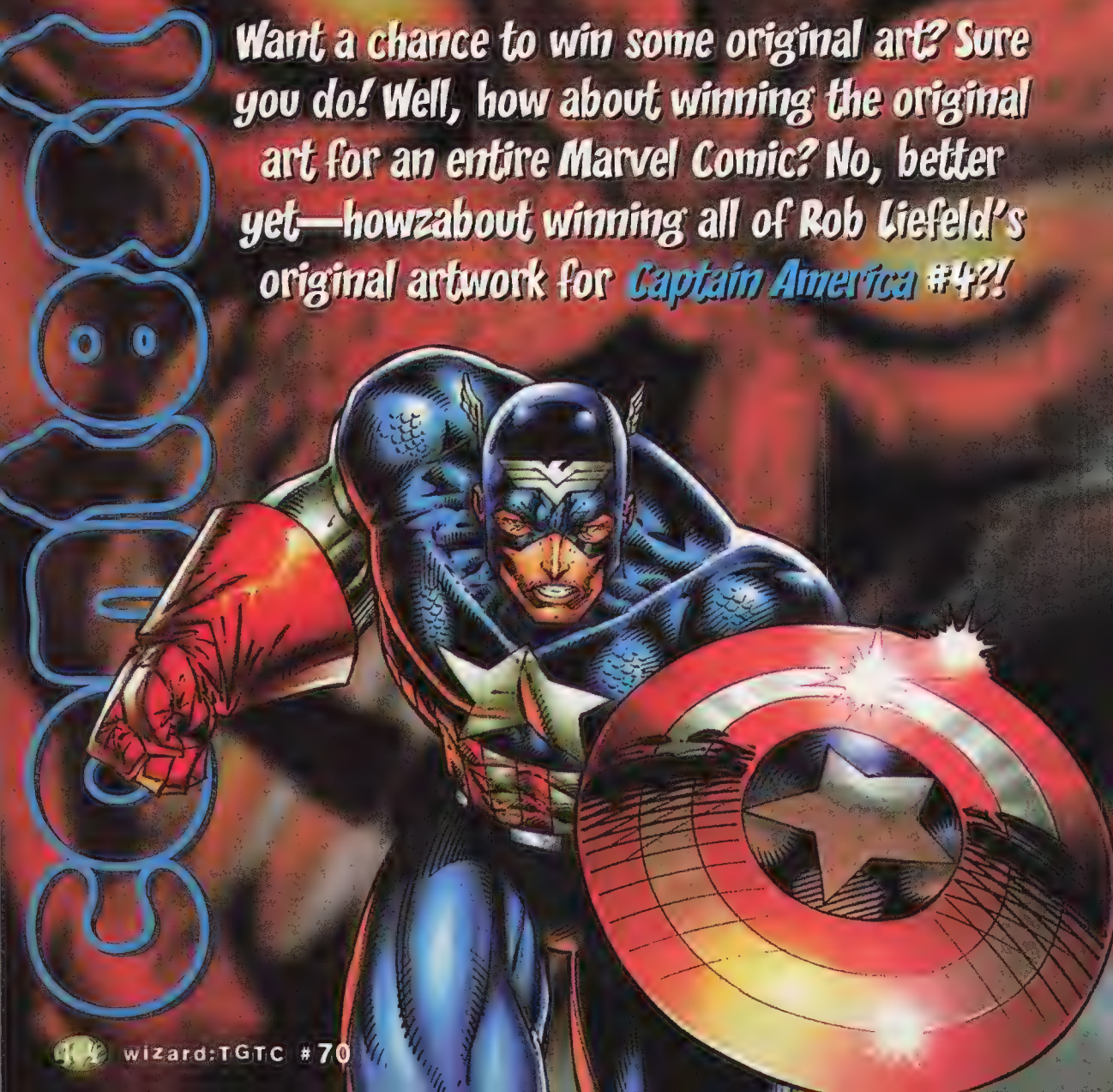
Recommended Reading

The Odd Adventure-Zine Ian and Ty Smith have made the jump from photocopied mini-comics to full-size comics with the first issue of *The Odd Adventure-Zine*. One of the good things about this series is that every issue has a nicely written self-contained story, so you can pick up and enjoy any issue. This first issue finds the main character, Moe (an investigator of bizarre and fantastic things), trying to figure out why animals and people are turning up stuffed by a mysterious taxidermist. Things just get more bizarre from there. For more information, write to Zamboni Press, 16842 NW Joscelyn St., Beaverton, OR 97006.

Mister Blank Newcomer Chris Hicks has a winner on his hands. His crisp black-and-white art and beautiful gray tones make this comic a joy to look at. Hicks has also crafted an interesting story about Sam Smith, an ordinary guy who gets thrown into an action-packed adventure when he breaks out of his drab routine and decides to confront two mysterious prowlers. Enough is revealed about the story in each issue to keep you interested, but Hicks holds the right amount back to keep you wanting more. If you can't find this comic at your local store, you can get in touch with Slave Labor Graphics at 979 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose, CA 95128 or call them toll-free at 1-800-866-8929 for a free catalog.

The Captain America Super Art Giveaway Contest

Want a chance to win some original art? Sure you do! Well, how about winning the original art for an entire Marvel Comic? No, better yet—howzabout winning all of Rob Liefeld's original artwork for *Captain America* #4?!



What You Need To Play:

Just a pen! See, all you gotta do is fill out that official entry form below, slap it in an envelope, moisten a stamp, pop it on there and mail it off to us. One winner, chosen completely at random, walks off with the top prize!

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will receive all of the original artwork (including the cover) for *Captain America* #4! Sheesh! What more could ya want!

Photo by Paul Schiraldi

Second Prize (1): Another reader will receive a set of Rob Liefeld sketch/layout pages that went into the making of *Captain America* #4.

Third Prize (20): Twenty readers will each receive a copy of *Heroes Reborn* #1/2, autographed by Cap artist and writer Rob Liefeld and Jeph Loeb!

This contest is sponsored by Marvel Comics, patriotic to the bitter end.

Fill this bad boy out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Captain America Art Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline for the contest is June 30, 1997.

American Legal Matter

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Marvel Comics and their immediate families or red-skulled fascist wannabes. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Captain America Art Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. The only good thing about bringing back Bucky is that we get to watch him...er, her die again. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on July 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after July 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Captain America Art Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Super Art Giveaway Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JUNE 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

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THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST · 5 EXCELLENT · 4 GOOD · 3 SO-SO · 2 UGH · 1 CRAPOLA

THE UNCANNY X-MEN

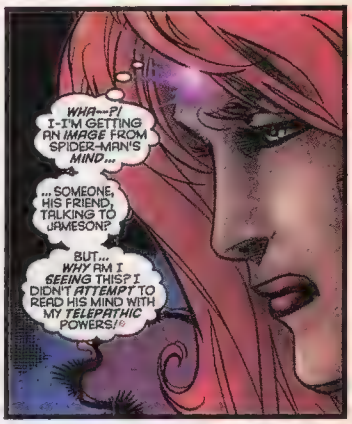
X misses the spot despite great characters

Issues Reviewed: #337-#344
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Scott Lobdell, Joe Madureira and Tim Townsend
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Feared and hated by the world they are sworn to protect, the X-Men learn to hone their mutant superpowers under the tutelage of telepath Professor Charles Xavier. The team consists of Cyclops, Phoenix, Wolverine, Rogue, Angel, Beast, Iceman, Storm, Bishop, Psylocke, Gambit, Cannonball and Joseph (an amnesiac Magneto).

The Good: The art style is dynamic and action packed. It successfully mixes up the panel arrangement, includes plenty of background details and keeps things moving (The splash pages always suck you right into the story.). And like the many distinguished X-styles preceding this one (established by John Byrne and Jim Lee to name a few), *Uncanny*'s art is already spawning a new trend among today's artists.

This title relies mostly on the strength of its great characters. Each of the X-Men has his/her own personality, and the interaction among the members gives the book a good family feel. A strong sense of humor between the characters also adds to the enjoyment.



The Bad: If you haven't been following this title consistently, you will have a hard time getting back into the swing of things. Issue #337 deals with the repercussions of "Onslaught," and yet, nowhere does it state exactly what happened nor does it outright mention that Professor X *was* Onslaught! In issues #341-#344, the long-standing relationship between the Shi'ar and the X-Men is never explained, and the story loses its sense of purpose because of it.

And not explaining or resolving things is common. For example: Pyro's odd appearance/disappearance in issue #338, Phoenix's powers going screwy in issue #339, Angel's wings mysteriously returning in issue #338 and the emergence of Psylocke's new "phasing" powers are all conveniently not developed.

While there are some good ideas at the heart of this book, some plot points are contrived. The Phalanx (issues #341-#344) are handled almost identically to the Borg in "Star Trek: First Contact." The X-Men even beat the Phalanx with a convenient "virus," much like the resolution of the movie "Independence Day."

The Buzz: *The Uncanny X-Men* is consistently the industry's #1 best-selling book. This summer's "Zero Tolerance" X-crossover will only feed the frenzy.

The Skinny: At the heart of this book is a fun, family feeling with great characters, stunning art and an affable sense of humor. Though the series pokes fun of its own convoluted nature, it should try harder to resolve plotlines. There's too many dangling subplots without sufficient development, and you can never really enjoy these characters and their stories as much as you'd like.

Subplots like Jean's screwy powers take either too much time to develop or are forgotten completely

Great character interaction gives the book a "family" feel

The Verdict: 3

WITCHBLADE

Looks aren't everything

Issues Reviewed: #1-#11
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Image Comics
Creative Team: Christina Z., David Wohl, Michael Turner and D-Tron
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Sara Pezzini's a tough cop with a strange weapon: the Witchblade, an ancient, powerful gauntlet that selects a worthy female wielder every generation.

The Good: At the heart of the book is a great concept. It modernizes the legend of King Arthur's sword Excalibur, but twists it by adding a curse. The Witchblade gauntlet is pure evil connected to a person who is intrinsically good—which sets up a potentially interesting conflict.

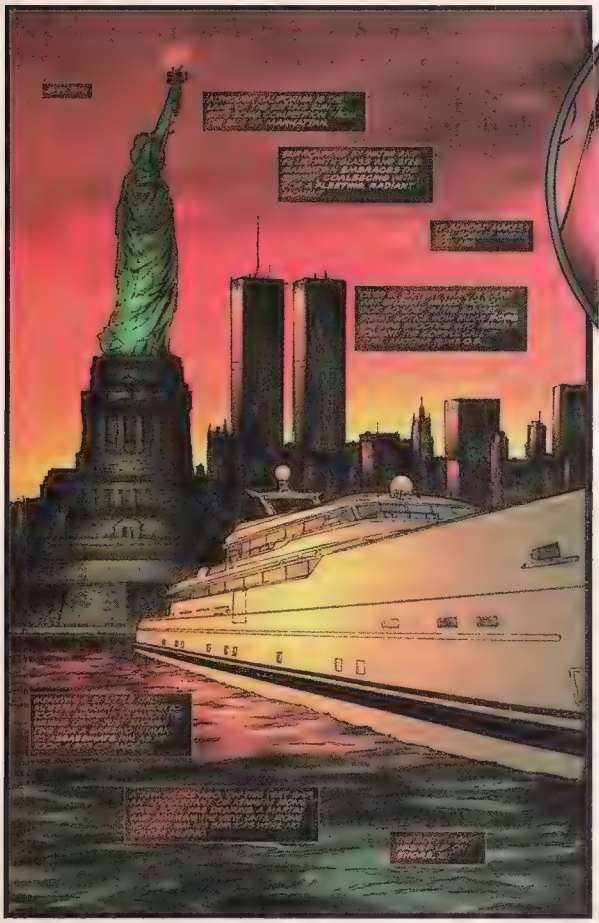
The most striking thing about this series is the gorgeous coloring. The colorist's use of vibrant oranges, yellows and blues really give *Witchblade* a sultry mood and make this book stand out.

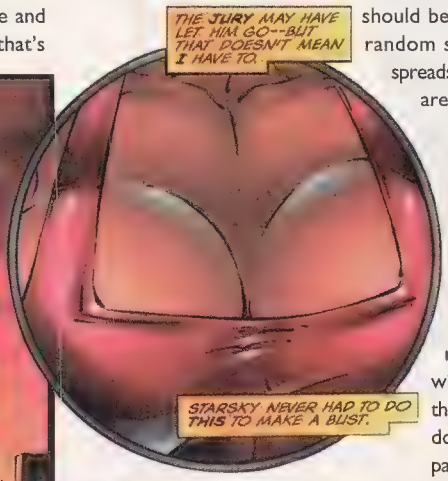
Complementing these colors is the art. With a Marc Silvestri-esque linework, the artist is slowly developing his own style and adding a wealth of detail to his backgrounds, an element that's painfully lacking in a number of today's comics. The book has an elegantly visual style about it—there are red roses and posh furniture seemingly in every panel.

The Bad: The numerous T&A shots are rather gratuitous. Unfortunately, they are almost necessary to keep a reader's interest, because the stories move so slowly. Sluggish pacing and excessively wordy dialogue and caption text weigh the book down immeasurably. Faster pacing and fewer words would pick up the slack.

As for the characters themselves, most of them lack depth. So much time is spent on Sara battling her inner demons that there's no time devoted to the rest of the cast's character development. Her concerned partner Jake? We don't know enough about him to care (Also, as an aside, about 95 percent of the characters in the book are perfect supermodels—where are all the fat people?).

There are some technical problems, too. Sometimes the panel structure is unclear, as you're not exactly sure what order you should be reading them in. The random sideways double-page spreads are as annoying as they are unnecessary.





New readers will have a tough time jumping on board this title because there aren't any recaps explaining just what the Witchblade is. It doesn't help, either, that the first pages of most issues are so laden with text newcomers to the book might get bogged down, trying to struggle past the wordiness.

The Buzz: This book is all buzz and fans dig it. *Witchblade* is consistently high on all the sales charts and the title's connection to the new Garth Ennis/Marc Silvestri vehicle, *The Darkness*, will likely keep it there.

The Skinny: A good concept is lost amid too much dialogue, gratuitous T&A and bland characters. The *Witchblade* crew should take a cue from DC's *Catwoman* and *Supergirl* to see how to make a strong female character and an entertaining supporting cast.

Gratuitous T&A takes away from a great concept

Witchblade's awesome coloring speaks for itself (but note the excessive use of captions)

The Verdict: 2

ASTRO CITY

A great place to visit

Issues Reviewed: #1-#5
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Image Comics
Creative Team: Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Astro City is a thriving Midwestern metropolis chock full of superheroes, supervillains, vampires and mystical beings. The book's stories are usually told from the perspective of one of its denizens, whether it be hero, villain or normal folk.

The Good: *Astro City*'s stories are friggin' awesome because they take typical concepts and make them into interesting concepts. Issues #2-#3 are told from the perspective a 10-year-old girl who's part of a family superteam; the story puts her in search of a "normal" life her fantastic family life hadn't allowed her. Another story (#4-#5) sees the initiation of a superhero sidekick wannabe going from busboy to superhero…but being a sidekick to a mysterious vigilante isn't all it's cracked up to be. These are very smart and entertaining stories.

The dialogue and characterization are so on target you can't help but love these characters. Although the superheroes in the book have flashy costumes and incredible powers, they are portrayed realistically and the stories always center on the human side of being a hero in Astro City.

The art also does a good job of moving you through the story, beautifully complementing the scripts, with neither part overshadowing or slowing down the other. And let's not forget the lettering, something you normally only notice if it's really poor. Here, however, it fits in perfectly, making the stories easy to read.

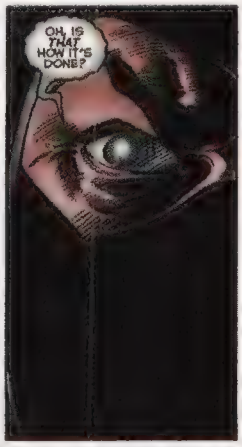
If you're a newcomer, the title does a wonderful job of filling you in on what's happened before, as well giving a rundown as to who all the major characters are.

And last, but certainly not least, every issue comes wrapped with a sharp painted cover by Alex Ross.

The Bad: The only thing we can think of is that there's a lot of intentional nostalgia in this book and some readers might not be able to absorb the full "experience" of *Astro City*. The are specific comic book references like Mount Kirby (named after the late great artist Jack Kirby), and characters like the First Family and their foes have a Fantastic Four-like feel. In fact, most of the characters are inspired by others; some are just more obvious about it.

The Buzz: It took a while, but fans are finally visiting *Astro City* more regularly, as evidenced by its rapid ascent into the Top 50 on the best-seller charts (It's about time.).

The Skinny: Great art, great stories, great dialogue, great covers, great characters…everything about this series tells us *Astro City* is currently *the* best superhero comic book being published today. Period.



Being a hero ain't all it's cracked up to be, as a 10 year-old searches for a "normal" life

Being a sidekick in Astro City *ain't like being Robin*

The Verdict: 6

AZRAEL

Awkward elements make Azrael less real

Issues Reviewed: #21-#29
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Dennis O'Neil, Barry Kitson and James Pascoe
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Given post-hypnotic mind conditioning, Jean Paul Valley becomes Azrael, the super-assassin of the secret society known as the Order of St. Dumas. As Azrael, Valley transforms into a merciless killer who loses his own personality. Early in his "career," Valley briefly became Batman (subbing for Bruce Wayne who was recovering from a broken spine). Recently, he and three allies destroyed the Order itself.

The Good: There are a lot of great concepts behind this book. First, Jean Paul only has access to Azrael's super-strength, speed and training when he dons the mask and costume. Second, he also gains a separate Azrael personality and loses his own, a major dilemma for Jean Paul who lacks control of his own actions. This gives an added dimension to the character, and creates an air of intrigue.

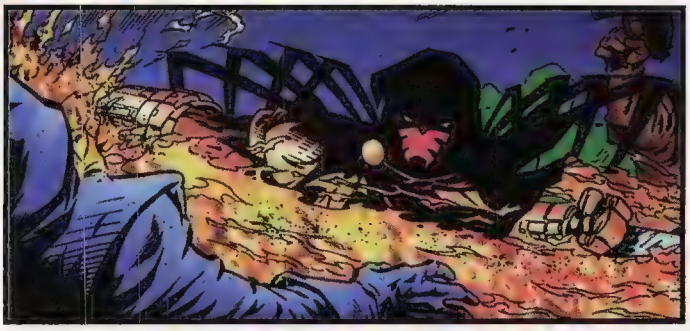
Another interesting aspect of the series is the Order of St. Dumas, which gives the book an interesting backdrop. Even though it's destroyed (as of issue #26), you can expect stories about it from time to time.

The clean art style and layouts make for fast-paced storytelling. There's fine detail given to the Azrael costume, which is one of the more interesting costumes out there.

The Bad: For new readers, there are no character/story recaps to introduce each issue. Questions abound: Why does Azrael keep going to the Batcave? How did he get his powers? What is the Order all about? If you aren't up to date, you're on your own.

Many of the characters' personalities aren't fleshed out. The dialogue rarely gives you a feel for the character who's saying it, and comes across as stiff and too scholarly. For your average free-spirited, stress-laden college student, Jean Paul himself is usually unemotional and bland.

When the book deals with a character whose personality is fleshed out, the character's personality comes off rather badly—as is clearly evident when Batman makes guest appearances. It seems very out of character for the Dark Knight to let Azrael go on missions that are sure to fail, or allow him to break an inmate out of Arkham Asylum.



Azrael's missions often change direction so haphazardly you're given whiplash. Issues #24-#26 show Azrael and friends planning to kill the insane leader of the Order, but two-thirds of the way into the story they decide they have to *save* him instead. In addition, these quick-shifting plots are often contrived (i.e., just when Azrael goes to Arkham in #27, *all* the villains escape), and could be made more entertaining.

The Buzz: The recent *Ash/Azrael* crossover brought attention to this character, especially with original Azrael designer Joe Quesada drawing it. Starting with issue #31, Roger Robinson will take over the art.

The Skinny: *Azrael* is a book with interesting concepts trying to break past its awkward stories and flat characters. Unfortunately, it's got a way to go.

The art is fast-paced and dynamic

Allowing a break-out from Arkham Asylum is out of character for Batman

The Verdict: 3

Only the daring need apply!

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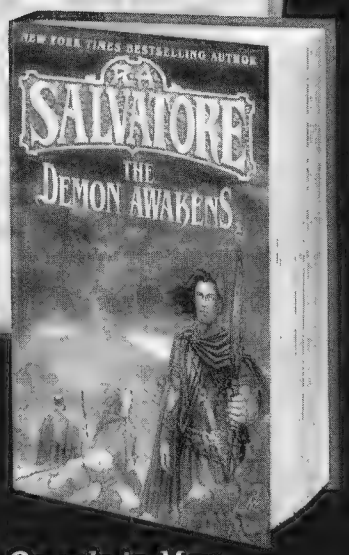

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PICKS

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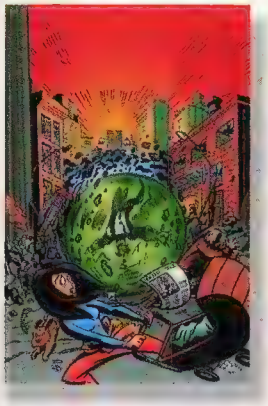


ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #4

AQUAMAN #34

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

[EDITORS NOTE: To check out what's happening in all of your favorite Marvel titles involved in May's "Flashback Month," check out our "Flashback" feature on page 50!

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #4

DC COMICS "In baneful day or grandest night, all shall tremble before my sight. Let all who oppose me take their flight, beware my power, beware Darkseid's might!" Uh-oh…looks like Darkseid is now in control of Green Lantern's power ring. Hmm…maybe if he kills alla them crappy New Gods it wouldn't be such a bad thing. By Steve Vance, John Delaney and Ron Boyd. **$1.75**

AQUAMAN #34

DC COMICS

Peter David started writing this title
and seemed to enjoy messin' with Aquaman's head.
The first thing he did was chop off his hand
and give Arthur this swell hook instead.
Then he started muckin' with his powers,
making him this monster telepath.
That, and he made Artie meaner;
screw with him and he'll kick your ath.
But now his powers have gone all screwy,
he's growing scales and his eyes are all black.
Freaked out, his friends have deserted him.
This ish he fights to get them back!
By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti. **$1.75**

BATMAN: MR. FREEZE

DC COMICS Before we talk about this comic, a quick prediction: the "Batman & Robin" movie will suck so bad it will frighten small children and make the elderly explode. Anyway, this one-shot Mr. Freeze issue is fantastic! Having ZERO to do with the movie, this story fills you in on Freeze's origin and ties with *Batman: The Long Halloween* as the best Bat-story we've read in years! Go buy it. By Paul Dini, Mark Buckingham and Wayne Faucher. Dini says, "There had never been a unified origin of Mr. Freeze. He didn't have much of a back story to him, which was something we realized when we did the animated series. That's why we created the origin of him being a cryogenics expert and wanting to save his wife. It makes him a tragic character." **$4.95**

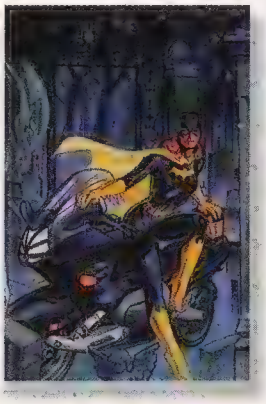
BATMAN: BATGIRL

DC COMICS Before there was Batgirl, there was plain old Barbara Gordon, daughter of Commissioner Jim Gordon. Believing she could do more by working outside of the law she donned a skintight outfit and became a costumed vigilante (Y'know, how much cooler would the world be if that's what frustrated people did in reality?). Her first case? Simple. All she's gotta do is take down…the Joker. By Kelly Puckett, Matt Haley and Karl Kesel. **$4.95**

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #8 (OF 13)

DC COMICS Did we mention this is one of the best Bat-stories

BATMAN:MR. FREEZE



BATMAN: BATGIRL

THE FLASH #127

GEN[13] #19

we've read all year? Yeah? Well, we'll reiterate anyway: this is one of the best Bat-stories we've read all year. It's just bursting with a rich supporting cast, a villain who's a mystery to the reader as much as to the characters and appearances by the villains in Batman's Rogues Gallery. The story is set in the cool "Batman: Year One" time frame! Do yourself a favor: go back, buy any back issues you missed and quit missing one of the best boats in comics! By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$2.95**

BONE #20

CARTOON BOOKS Trapped in a war between the Rat Creatures and the Dragons, Thorn's gotta make a tough choice: stay and fight in the valley or try and discover whatever happened to Gran'ma Ben. Plus, this issue features the triumphant return of…the possum babies!! Hoo hah! By Jeff Smith. **$2.95**

BRAINBANX #5 (OF 6)

VERTIGO/DC Anna, who's already got one extra brain inside her head, has to enter the warped mind of Logan, the director of ORC's son (ORC being that wacky company growing human brains inside sheep). That and hey, how cool is it that the Undertaker is the new WWF champ? By Elaine Lee and Temujin. **$2.50**

THE FLASH #127

DC COMICS "Hell to Pay" Part 1 (of 3). Hey, what's dead and in this issue? Give up? The Flash's Rogues Gallery. Yep, looks like Heatwave, Captain Cold, Mirror Master, Weather Wizard and Captain Boomerang are back from Hell and looking to cause a great deal of property damage. Their target: the Flash's ex-hometown of Keystone City. Betcha Keystone is kinda rethinkin' that whole "no superheroes allowed" ban right about now. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn and Paul Ryan. **$1.75**

GEN[13] #19

IMAGE On the run from the Keepers (no relation to the Keeblers), the kids head off to Antarctica (whoo-hoo, Fairchild in cold weather!!) in search of an old friend of their mentor Lynch. What they find is…a land that time forgot?!? Waitaminute…if this is some dinosaur-filled jungle in the middle of the Antarctic, WildStorm should be ashamed of itself. Read Marvel's *Ka-Zar* did ya? By Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner. **$2.50**. Also, be sure to check out the *Gen[13] Annual* #1 and see the kids get drunk in London. By Warren Ellis and Steve Dillon. **$2.95**

GREEN LANTERN #88

DC COMICS After helping out his buds at STAR Labs and visiting the grave of his old girlfriend, Kyle finally does what he's been avoiding for some time now…visit his mom. Prepare yourself ('cause Kyle won't be) for what he finds. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin. **$1.75**

HEPCATS #6

ANTARCTIC PRESS Erica and that mysterious guy from the past few issues finally meet face to face, an encounter that turns violent when Arnie arrives and gets his ass handed to him by the mystery guy. And what is Erica so pissed about? By Martin Wagner. **$2.95.**

HITMAN #16

DC COMICS "Ace of Killers" Part 2 (of 6). What's more fun than being a mind-reading hitman with X-ray eyes? Why, having Catwoman guest star in your comic so you can put your special vision to work! Whoo-hoo, nekkid Catwoman! *Ahem* Anyway, Tommy (that's Hitman) and Selina (that's nekkid Catwoman) team up to find out why the group of killers called the Arkannone are going to kill him. Also, Etrigan the Demon shows up. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

IMPULSE #27

DC COMICS Witness the impossible: in response to a curfew aimed at young teens in Impulse's town, the kids, including Bart, stage a sit-in at the mall. Get it? Bart, king of no-patience rash behavior, has to sit. Quietly. For hours. By Mark Waid, Ruben Diaz, Craig Rousseau and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

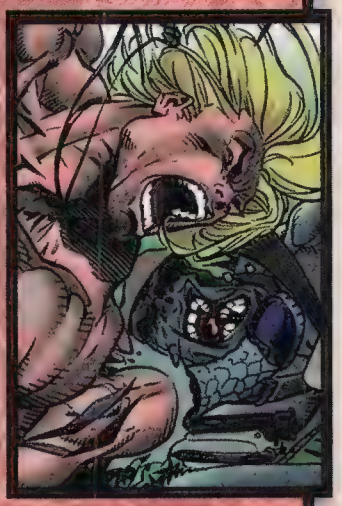
JLA #7

DC COMICS This is the single-best superhero team book on the

READ THIS BOOK!

KA-ZAR #3

MARVEL After slapping around Ka-Zar and nearly killing Zabu, Gregor (that's the guy who Ka-Zar's evil brother hired to kill our hero) kidnapped Ka-Zar's son and made off with him across the Antarctic wastes (wonder if he'll run into them Gen[13] kids wanderin' out there this month and beat them to jelly?). Hot on his heels, Ka-Zar and Shanna (that be Mrs. Ka-Zar) are faced with a bit of a problem: How do you catch the man who trained Kraven the Hunter? Writer Mark Waid says, "This is the big issue. It's the climax to the first story arc. Ka-Zar and Shanna have to track Gregor across the wilderness of Antarctica to get their son back and make Gregor pay for his crimes. What's really weighing on Ka-Zar's head is that a lot of the devastation that Gregor has brought to the Savage Land is all his fault." By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. **$1.95**



market today! You deserve a slap if you're not readin' this title. This ish: the JLA joins forces with the renegade angel Zauriel to combat the forces of Heaven and halt the impending Armageddon! When you got this much cool, you don't need an "X" in your title. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.95**

KANE #17

DANCING ELEPHANT PRESS An unannounced *JLA* #7 crossover?!? Nah, though this issue does introduce...the ANGELS (Armed No Go Emergency Liaison Squad)! When the Mayor is taken prisoner, Sgt. Nelson calls in these goons to show just how useful extreme violence can be. By Paul Grist. **$3.50**

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #7

IMAGE Wheee! Let's tie a minor to a corpse, toss her into the sea and watch her drown! Sound like fun? Then go pick up this ish, as that's what the pirate ghost does to Chance. That, and go get some counseling, you sicko. By James Robinson, Paul Smith and George Freeman. **$2.50**

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #94

DC COMICS Peek inside the journal of one of the time-displaced Legionnaires (Okay, actually inside the journal of Shvaughn Erin, the 30th century cop hanging with the lost Legionnaires. Same difference.)! By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder and Ron Boyd. **$2.25**

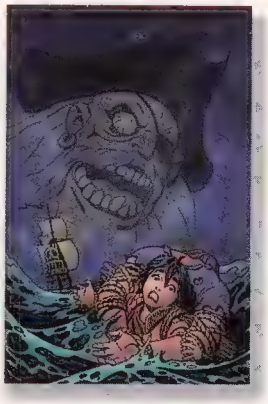
LORDS OF MISRULE #6 (OF 6)

DARK HORSE COMICS Why it sucks to be the lead character in this comic: 1) Your girlfriend was just chopped up into bite-size pieces. 2) When you return to your hometown to recover, you're attacked by ghosts, rats and demon dogs. 3) That prehistoric giant warthog named Bluejohn? He's your dad. By Dan Abnett, John Tomlinson, Steve White and Peter Snejbjerg. **MR $2.95**

READ THIS BOOK!

LEGIONNAIRES #50

DC COMICS The wedding of a Legionnaire! Shame it's Violet, still under the control of the Emerald Eye, marrying that evil dillweed Mordru. Can the rest of the Legionnaires crash the wedding and stop Mordru before he becomes one with the Eye? Wait...it's double-sized, has two major villains who've kicked the Legion's butt before AND it's an anniversary issue? Yeah, and somebody's dying in this book. By Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and W.C. Carani. Stern says, "It's all-out action as the Legionnaires go up against Mordru, trying to stop him from becoming the power which will overcome the entire galaxy. They've also gotta stop him from marrying Violet. Some Legionnaires won't be coming back from this one." **$3.95**



LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #7

QUANTUM & WOODY #4

POISON ELVES #24

SIRIUS Women are trouble. Just ask Lusipher. First his ex-wife re-entered his life a few issues back and has been nothing but a pain, and now Morachi's wife (Morachi being Lusipher's boss from the Assassins' Guild) is back with a dark secret from Lusipher's past. Hey, with a name like Lusipher you expect life to be easy? By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

PREACHER #27

VERTIGO/DC Jesse has rescued Cassidy, escaped Masada and survived the Saint of Killers, but now he faces...Tulip. 'Member how Jesse ditched his gal Tulip to go against the grail alone? Well, she's pissed and has something special planned in return (See? Women are trouble.). By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

PRIDE AND JOY #1 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC What do you do when a psychotic killer intent on destroying your life comes knocking on your door? Call the police? Not when that killer is tied to your own dark past, you don't. Yet another dark, unsettling, evil little story from the creator of *Preacher* (And issue #1 features one of the most shocking last pages we've seen in comics in years!). Great stuff by Garth Ennis and John Higgins. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #4

ACCLAIM Quantum wants to be the epitome of a superhero—strong, brave, a potential candidate for a "Heroes Reborn" project—all that stuff. But no one takes him seriously 'cause his partner Woody is the biggest goofball on the planet. When the two can't work together, how can they save innocents being held captive in a mall? By Christopher Priest, Mark Bright and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

ROBIN #43

DC COMICS As the Spoiler learns more on the dangers of being a superhero, Tim Drake uses his Batman-trained detective skills to learn the dark secrets of his buddy Ives. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith. Dixon says, "Robin fans will remember the Baffler, Cluemaster's idiot assistant. He's out for revenge against the Spoiler. In this story, he's gonna blow up a building with Robin and the Spoiler in it, and inadvertently he's in it too. Robin's gonna have to get them all out and save the Baffler's life." **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #52

VERTIGO/DC "The Scarlet Ghost," Part 4 (of 4). The final confrontation between the Sandman and the gang that's been blowing up pulp fiction publishing houses occurs this issue. So with the exception of the assassin who's still on the loose apparently targeting all of the Sandman's loved ones, everything worked out just great. By Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. **MR $2.50**

SAVAGE DRAGON #39

IMAGE Onslaught. The Juggernaut. Doomsday. Now brace yourself as the Dragon takes on...Dung. Bring a Wetnap. By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

SPAWN #62

IMAGE That wench Angela has gone and screwed with something in Limbo, causing a ripple effect allowing Spawn to revert back to Al Simmons—but only for 24 hours. Now he's gotta decide: take down Jason Wynn, the man who murdered him or pay a visit to his wife Wanda. Us? We'd pay a visit to Jason Wynn's wife. That'd learn 'im. By Todd McFarlane and Greg Capullo. Ol' Spawny guy's creator himself (that's McFarlane, silly) says, "At one time or another we've all dreamed about being able to alter our past. For Spawn to become Al Simmons again is the chance of a lifetime, but we'll find out just what price will have to be paid for that chance." **$1.95**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #6

IMAGE Let's see...Katchoo's been rejected by her best friend Francine and dumped by her quasi-boyfriend David (Yeah, Francine swings both ways.). So what's a lesbian to do? Tell ya what: she hooks back up with Darcy Parker, that evil bitch who treated Katchoo like a piece o' meat. That and it looks like Francine is reigniting a flame with Chuck. No prob there, except Chuck's currently living with Francine's new boss Rachel. By Terry Moore. **$2.75**

STRAY BULLETS #14

EL CAPITÁN Orson and Beth are still stuck in that bizarre little town of Seaside, and just when things are looking to take a turn for the better, people begin up and dying left and right. Wow, 48 pages of blood and mayhem! By David Lapham. **$3.50**

THUNDERBOLTS #4

MARVEL Arnim Zola's back and all set to genetically alter everyone in Manhattan, turning them into his slaves. Of course, the Thunderbolts are on the case and will stop him. They've also got a new member, Jolt (she's full of caffeine, too). The problem is, they don't want anyone discovering their secret. So how do they keep her away without being too suspicious? By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. **$1.95**

PREACHER #27

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #52

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Hellboy: Wake the Devil (Dark Horse)
You want a vampire story, well here it is. After a murder, Hellboy goes off to Romania and gets on the trail of an ancient vampire, Vladimir Guirescu. He also finds Nazi scientists who are making plans for the end of the world (What else did you expect Nazi scientists to be doing?). It's an all-out blood sucking, Nazi-stomping battle. This trade paperback collects the complete five issue mini-series, plus a brand new five-page epilogue. By Mike Mignola. **$17.95**

Monkeyman & O'Brien (Dark Horse)
It was just a regular day until Anne O'Brien opened a portal that gave her super-strength and deposited a gigantic, super-intelligent gorilla (that can talk, no less) in her house. And what do you do with a super-intelligent gorilla (other than buy lots o' banana)? You go out and fight crime. Of course, the weirdos these two fight ain't normal: there's space frogs, the Shrewmanoid and his army of monsters and living gargoyles to name a few. The *Monkeyman & O'Brien Special* plus the three-issue mini-series are included in this trade paperback. By Arthur Adams. **$16.95**

Sandman: The Wake (Vertigo/DC) ►
Morpheus, the Sandman, is dead. What will happen to The Dreaming now that he's gone? This trade paperback collects *Sandman* #70-#75 (including three additional pages only seen in *The Dreaming* #8), and brings to a close the entire *Sandman* series. By Neil Gaiman, Michael Zulli, Jon J. Muth and Charles Vess. **MR. $19.95**

TICK SPECIAL

ACCLAIM SPOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOON! He's big, he's blue, he's nigh-invulnerable and he's dumb as a post, but the Tick is back in comics! This ain't like the old series, though. He's now in full color and in all-new adventures. You can be sure to see all his cronies, too: Arthur, Sewer Urchin, American Maid, Chairface Chippendale...all of them. But remember, it's only a special so pick it up while it's around. By Ben Edlund. **$4.50**

PICKS

TICK'S BACK #0

NEW ENGLAND COMICS SPOOOOOOOON! He's big, he's blue, he's nigh-invulnerable, and he's dumb as a post, but the Tick is back…waitaminute, we already said that. So what's this? Oh, this is a new one-shot leading into an all-new Tick ongoing series in August. Okay. Well, we used all of our excitement for the previous Tick write-up, so read that one. There's just some guy named Toy DeForce in this one. By Eli Stone. **$2.95**

TYRANT #5

SPIDERBABY GRAPHIX So you're a baby T-Rex livin' in prehistoric times. What do ya do? Well, for starters, you try not to get squished by the other dinosaurs. But what do you do when one of the other dinos attacks your home? Check out this ish and find out, as an Eggsucker attacks Tyrant's home. By Stephen R. Bissette. **$2.95**

TICK SPECIAL

UNKNOWN SOLDIER #4

UNKNOWN SOLDIER #4 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC He's taken a lot of crap along the way, but Clyde (the FBI guy) has finally found the elusive Unknown Soldier. But Clyde's not sure it's him 'cause he's the Unknown Soldier…get it? He's the Unknown Soldier…never mind. Anyway, once he's found him, Clyde learns that he's been a pawn in the ever-twisting world of government plots and international espionage. He also learns he's the last link in all of this, and it just might be his undoing. By Garth Ennis and Killian Plunkett. **MR $2.50**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN '97

MARVEL Osborn Chemicals spawns a new supervillain named Sundown. What is it with this place? Either new villains are created there, someone's trying to take it over or its labs are being used to create super hi-tech weapons. We think it's time for Spider-Man or someone else to just blow it up and be done with it. Anyway, Spidey's gotta stop Sundown. By Kurt Busiek and Tom Lyle. **$1.95**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #2

DC COMICS The team's startin' to get things shaped up at their new HQ and gettin' to know each other a little better. They also get their first job kickin' the crap outta some sword-wielding ancient mummy that's gone on a rampage. But behind the scenes, things are getting suspicious. What's Hard Drive's big plan for the team? And why does he keep telekenetically/telepathically "pushing" the other members of the team toward certain things. Hmmm…somethin's fishy. By Dan Raspler, Dev Madan and Keith Champagne. **$1.75**

AT A GLANCE

A LISTING OF THE HIGH-PROFILE BOOKS SHIPPING IN MAY

Ash: Cinder & Smoke #1 (Event)
A new villain, Smoke, shows up to make trouble for Ash and crew. **$2.95**

Batman #544 (DC)
The Joker and Etrigan the Demon team up to take down Batman. **$1.95**

Curse of the Spawn #9 (Image)
Get a look at where Angela came from and why she's the type of angelic warrior she is. **$1.95**

Darkchylde: The Diary #1 (Image)
Get a look inside the mind of Ariel, as you peek inside her diary. **$2.50**

Detective Comics #711 (DC)
Bruce Wayne must stop a bunch of crimes, but he can't change into his costume or he'll give away his secret identity. **$1.95**

DV8 #8 (Image)
Some of the kids find children, and only children, playing in the streets of a supposedly abandoned Russian city. **$2.50**

Evil Ernie: Destroyer #1 (Chaos!)
Evil's hellbent on eradicating all life, so he goes to get some nukes to do the job right. **$2.95**

Fantastic Four #9 (Marvel)
The Fantastic Four find out just who and what the Inhumans are. **$1.95**

Gen^{13} Bootleg #7 (Image)
Roxy goes off to a Renaissance fair, but doesn't come back. So the rest of the gang goes after her. **$2.50**

Iron Man #9 (Marvel)
Iron Man gets beat up by Rebel and taken to the Mandarin. Only Bruce Banner (a.k.a. Hulk) can save him. **$1.95**

Manga Shi 2000 #3 (Crusade)
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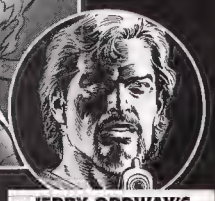

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TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

JUSTICE LEAGUE TV

By Rob Allstetter

This is quickly becoming the year of the **Justice League**. The new *JLA* comic book series has been a brisk seller, and several of DC's venerable heroes will be appearing in live-action form before the year's end.

Here's a rundown:

• Warner Bros. is producing a live-action movie pilot, "The Justice League of America," that began filming in late March. The movie, and possible subsequent weekly series, will be on CBS.

The story, written by Lorne Cameron and David Hoselton, is loosely based on the late-1980s Justice League by **Keith Giffen** and **J.M. DeMatteis**, which featured a lighter tone and lots of humorous interplay between the JLA members. Scott Shepherd is the movie's executive producer.

The Justice League's television lineup includes: **Martian Manhunter**, the mysterious leader of the team; **Flash** (Barry Allen, the Silver Age version), who has problems finding a job; **Green Lantern** (Guy Gardner), who struggles trying to mix his girlfriend into his superhero lifestyle; **The Atom** (Al Pratt, the Golden Age version), a science teacher; **Fire**, an aspiring actress; and **Ice**, a research lab assistant.

The cast includes Kenny Johnston as Flash, John Kassir as The Atom, Michelle Hurd as Fire, Kim Oja as Ice, Matthew Settle as Guy and Lisa Donovan as Cheryl, Guy's girlfriend. At press time, there was no actor assigned to the J'onn J'onzz role, and it doesn't appear the Flash in the telefilm will be in the same continuity from "The Flash" series that aired on CBS in 1990.

The story begins with the Justice League already established and Ice's origin is incorporated and linked to the film's villain, the Weatherman. Look for the Weatherman to menace the League's home turf (New Metro) with a weather-controlling device. There are several action sequences in the story, with the League members using their comic-book powers.

CBS is expected to announce its fall lineup in May.

A Giffen/DeMatteis-style Justice League will hit CBS in late '97 (above), while Nicolas Cage could be Superman (below).

• Casting calls have gone out on both coasts for the lead role in a possible **"Aquaman"** TV series, which would likely be for the WB Network. This version of Aquaman is Arthur Curry, who must balance his land identity as founder of an oceanographic institute with his Atlantean heritage as protector of the seas.

• **Nicolas Cage**, the Academy Award-winning actor from "Leaving Las Vegas," has been in talks to play the lead in the new theatrical **Superman** film Warner is targeting for a summer 1998 release. **Sandra Bullock** is rumored to be in discussion for the role of Lois Lane (Cage, a big comics fan, has also been linked to an "Iron Man" film from 20th Century Fox.).

Photo: Everett Collection

• **"Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman,"** which has been slumping in the ratings this season, was moved from Sundays to Saturdays (8 p.m. ET) by ABC beginning April 12.

A representative of ABC could not release any information about a likely cliffhanger to end the series' fourth season in May. Rumors continue that a baby might be in the future for Lois and Clark, although sources said DC Comics is resisting that.

Beginning in September, reruns of "Lois & Clark" will air on the TNT cable network.

• This year's two big DC movies, **"Batman & Robin"** and **"Steel,"** remain on course for summer theatrical release (Look for a behind-the-scenes spotlight on "Batman & Robin" on page 44 of this issue, and the Shaq profile in this column.).

The animated "Spawn" is a go for May

SPAWN READY TO SHOW

Mark these dates on your calendar: May 16 for the premiere of the **"Spawn"** animated series on HBO and Aug. 22 for the opening of the "Spawn" live-action movie from New Line Cinema.

The adult-oriented animated series has six initial episodes that will air on successive Fridays at midnight. The six episodes will be repeated in September, and six more new episodes are planned for 1998.

Alan McElroy, writer of the live-action movie and co-executive producer of the animated series, wrote the first three episodes of the animated series: "Burning Vision," "No Rest, No Peace" and "Evil Intent."

The first three episodes include Spawn's arrival, his initial confusion and first encounter with the Clown, subplots involving Jason Wynn, Tony Twist and Senator Kincaid, the first transformation of the Clown into Violator, a battle with Overt-kill and the arrival of Chapel.

McElroy also has been hired to write the screenplay for a movie based on Capcom's *Resident Evil* video game. The movie rights to *Resident Evil* were purchased by Germany's Constantin Films, which is also co-producing "Silver Surfer" and "Fantastic Four" films with 20th Century Fox.

Photo courtesy of Everett Collection

According to MTV, musician Rob Zombie will work on the next "Crow" Movie

ZOMBIE IN CROW'S NEST?

First it was Jon Bon Jovi who was rumored to be in **"The Crow"** sequel. Now, **Rob Zombie** has been linked to a Crow movie. MTV has reported that Zombie, lead singer of the rock band White Zombie, will be involved in the third film version, which is not to be confused with the upcoming "The Crow" television series.

A representative of Pressman Films, which produced "The Crow" and "The Crow: City of Angels," declined to speculate about Zombie's involvement, but did recognize him as "an intriguing talent."

Zombie has a film background and recently contributed to a hallucinogenic scene in the animated movie "Beavis and Butt-Head Do America" and to the soundtrack for the Howard Stern movie "Private Parts."

'JEDI' WINS BOX-OFFICE WARS

"Return of the Jedi" completed a box-office hat trick in March. All three of the re-released "Star Wars" films opened at the No. 1 position at the box office and stayed in the top five for at least three weeks. "Return of the Jedi" was pushed back a week from its original release date of March 7 to allow more room for "The Empire Strikes Back" to flourish in theaters.

Peter Mayhew, the 7-foot-3 English actor who played Chewbacca, said he was delighted at how well the films were received.

"It's been surprising, the renewal of it," said Mayhew. "The films just get better. It's really a fairy story set in modern times with believable characters. You get goodies. You get baddies. It's something for both the younger and older generations."

Mayhew, 55, said he would jump at the chance to get back in the mask and mohair suit and be a Wookiee again for any of the new films "Star Wars" creator George Lucas is planning.

"I'd love to do them, even if it's only one," he said. "We still don't know if Chewie is going to be in them, but it's lovely to be involved in anything George does."

DILBERT ON FOX?

The Fox Network has released a list of 28 possible series in development for the next television season, including several with comic genre ties. They are:

"Dilbert": A live-action version of Scott Adams' popular comic strip. The series will include Dilbert's best friend Wally, his adversary Ken, their militant co-worker Alice and winsome consultant, Heather. Dogbert is also part of the series. Adams will co-executive produce with Bob Stevens.

"Manhattan Man": Ben Rode plays Nick Gaines, an assistant district attorney, who is forced into the superhero business as Manhattan Man. Nick's father, the original Manhattan Man (played by Ken Howard), can't pass on the tights and cape to Nick's older brother Willy (played by Ken Hudson Campbell) because a recessive gene gives poor Willy second-rate powers. Executive Producers Jamie Widdoes and Jonathan Axelrod are the creators of what Fox described as "a dysfunctional family of superheroes."

"The Notorious": Described by Fox as a "clever real-life comic book for adults," the series is about seven crime families, each representing one of the seven deadly sins. Justin Louis stars as Eddie Alighieri, framed for the death of his father by his evil uncle, played by Ben Gazzara. Roscoe Lee Browne, the veteran character actor who does the voice of Kingpin on the "Spider-Man" animated series, plays an inmate who helps Eddie.

"Blade Squad": Set in the year 2001, this action series features a police squad that moves on jet-powered roller blades. Brandon Tartikoff and Peter Iliff (writer of "Patriot Games" and "Die Hard with a Vengeance") are executive producers.

Fox will announce its fall schedule in May.

MIGHTY MARVEL UPDATE

The **"Spider-Man"** animated series was moved from 3:30 p.m. (ET) weekdays to 7:30 a.m. by Fox on March 31. The series returned to the 3:30 p.m. slot from April 14-25 only....**Doctor Doom** is the villain in Mike France's script for a big-screen **"Fantastic Four"** movie....The **"Nick Fury"** telefilm, written more than two years ago by David Goyer (who wrote "The Crow: City of Angels" and the in-production "Blade" film) and then back-burnered, now appears a possibility again for Fox. Sources confirm that **David Hasselhoff** ("Baywatch") will be playing Fury....Greg Johnson, the story editor for the first season of **"The Incredible Hulk"** animated series on UPN, will likely return for the second season.

CASPER IS TARZAN

Casper Van Dien and **Jane March** will star in **"Tarzan & Jane,"** a post-Greystoke movie from Village Roadshow Pictures.

"Tarzan & Jane" began production in March in South Africa. Carl Schenkel ("The Mighty Quinn," "Knight Moves") is directing from a screenplay by J. Anderson Black and Bayard Johnson. The story involves Tarzan returning to Africa to save his homeland.

Van Dien is also starring in **"Starship Troopers,"** scheduled for a Nov. 6 release. In that film, he plays the leader of a group of young soldiers who must defend themselves against a species of alien insects.

Jane March (below) joins Casper Van Dien in new Tarzan film

Everett Collection

"Fury" meets "Baywatch" as David Hasselhoff will star in TV movie

TIME FOR TIMECOP

ABC's **"Timecop"** television series, based on the Dark Horse comic book and the Jean-Claude Van Damme movie, will have a soap-opera flavor, thanks to two of its actors.

T.W. King, a cast member of the recently canceled ABC soap "The City," will star as Jack Logan, an officer of the Time Enforcement Commission, which, in the year 2007, monitors the time stream and stands ready to intercede when history is jeopardized by temporal interlopers.

King played Danny Roberts, a former drug dealer turned bad-boy model on "The City." It was a role he created in 1994 on the soap's previous incarnation, "Loving." King's television credits also include "Tour of Duty" and "Another World."

Other series regulars include Allyson Rice-Taylor (from the soap "As The World Turns") as Amy Fuller, Don Stark as Time Enforcement Commission Captain Matuzek, Kurt Fuller as Dr. Dale Easter and Sebastian Tillinger as Bob Kreutzer.

The series began production on March 19. Supervising producer Mark Verheiden, who wrote the "Timecop" movie, said he also wrote the first TV episode, "Rocket Science," which explores the ramifications of a time traveler with "nefarious plans" going back to 1944 Germany.

The first episode is being directed by executive producer Robert Singer, who is also an executive producer on "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman." Larry Gordon is also an executive producer of "Timecop," and Dark Horse's Mike Richardson is co-executive producer.

ABC has ordered 13 episodes of "Timecop," which is scheduled to premiere this fall.

SHORT TAKES

At press time, Disney had not set a release date for the direct-to-video **"Gen13"** animated movie. The film could be released as early as September and as late as Christmas....The animated **"Ash"** movie from DreamWorks is tentatively scheduled for a 1999 release....**"Men in Black,"** the upcoming film based on the Malibu Comics series and starring Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith, will also be an animated series. The Kids' WB network is scheduling the series, from Columbia TriStar, for an October premiere. It will air Saturdays at 11 a.m., replacing "The Daffy Duck Show."....A two-hour prequel movie will kick off cable network TNT's exclusive carrying of the **"Babylon 5"** television series. "Babylon 5: In the Beginning" will broadcast in January, and a second telefilm will begin production early next year....Alexander Salkind, who produced the first three **Superman** movies that starred Christopher Reeve, died of leukemia on March 8. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Salkind was believed to be 75. Also, David Doyle, who played the priest that married the Supercouple on **"Lois & Clark"** (and was also known as Bosley on "Charlie's Angels" and the voice of Tommy's grandfather on "Rugrats") died on Feb. 26 of a heart attack. He was 67....Brothers Paul and Chris Weitz, screenwriters of the upcoming DreamWorks animated feature comedy "Ants," are working on the screenplay for New Line Cinema's **"Badrock"** movie, which is based on the comic book characters created by Rob Liefeld....Michael Gondry has been tapped to direct Universal Pictures' **"Green Hornet"** film. He will oversee a rewrite of the original script by Rich Wilkes....David Quinn, who is currently writing the *Razor* comic book for London Night Studios, is writing a treatment for the **"Tommi Gunn"** movie, which will star Heather Elizabeth Parkhurst....Universal Cartoon Studios is producing 26 new episodes of the **"Casper"** animated series, pushing the Fox series' total to 52....Production began in March on "Sphere," a Warner Bros. film based on Michael Crichton's novel. **Sharon Stone**, Dustin Hoffman and Samuel L. Jackson will star in the underwater thriller, with Barry Levinson directing....**"The Mask,"** the live-action movie based on the Dark Horse comic book and starring Jim Carrey, will have its network premiere April 29 on Fox....After two seasons on the Kids' WB Network, **"Freakazoid!"** is now airing on the Cartoon Network Saturdays at 7 p.m. (ET) and Sundays at 8 p.m.... "Friends" star **Matt LeBlanc** will be Major Don West in the upcoming "Lost in Space" movie.... **"George of the Jungle,"** a live-action movie based on the 1960s cartoon, is scheduled for a July 16 release. W

Rob Allstetter was once the leader of a group that took on huge mutant toothpicks.

Celebrity Profile

SHAQUILLE O'NEAL

Shaquille O'Neal wears his feelings *under* his sleeve. Already named one of the 50 greatest players ever in the NBA, the $123 million center of the Los Angeles Lakers sports a Superman tattoo on his upper arm, demonstrating his much-publicized affection for the Man of Steel. In fact, O'Neal once said he wanted to obtain ownership of DC's flagship character.

So it's no surprise then that his film follow-up to last year's "Kazaam" is "Steel," in which he stars as the DC Comics character spun off from *Superman*. The media-savvy O'Neal, who already has rap records and video games under his belt, is executive producing the Warner Bros. film with pal Quincy Jones and is contributing three songs to the movie's soundtrack.

Photo: Robert Zuckerman

"Steel," written and directed by Kenneth Johnson, pits O'Neal's armor-clad hero against weapons-monger Nathaniel Hale, played by Judd Nelson. John Henry Irons is helped by Sparky (Annabeth Gish) and Uncle Joe (Richard Roundtree) in constructing his superhero suit.

The movie, due in theaters in early August, will have a $22 million budget. Banking on O'Neal's commercial viability, "Steel" should be buoyed by a marketing blitz, including the soundtrack, a Kenner toy line and a tie-in with Pepsi.

O'Neal, recuperating from an injury in March, gave *Wizard* a call and spoke about comics, movie-making and what to expect when "Steel" opens in early August.

Superman: "I got the tattoo two years ago. I've got a collection of everything with a Superman emblem on it. Everything."

Wearing the Steel armor: "It was hard. It took 45 minutes to put on, [including] leg pieces, thigh pieces, calf pieces and shoulder pieces. I could run in it, but not really run. I've got the hammer. It has a demagnetizer and a gadget gun."

Favorite Superman issue: "The one where Superman meets Steel."

Favorite comic book besides *Superman*: "*X-Men*. And *Wolverine*."

How the film is shaping up: "I've seen it all. I'm the executive producer. It's got a lot of action, good stunts and good special effects."

How he thinks the public will like Steel: "Old guys like [Gene] Siskel and [Roger] Ebert won't like it. They're too old. We need a new movie critics show. We need a hipper review show."

A "Steel" sequel: "Not sure. Maybe if this one does well."

His film future: "I'm going to take this summer off. I'd like to do a comedy with Chris Farley." ■ *RA*

SPECIAL REPORT
on next page

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SPECIAL REPORT: 'MEN IN BLACK'

By Marc Shapiro

Not a 'goofy alien movie,' 'Men' invades theaters in July

Comic books, especially comic books like the wildly appreciated, but only mildly successful, *The Men in Black*, don't become movies overnight. Sometimes it takes two nights, a year in development hell or...

"I found this in the closet the other day," chuckles "Men in Black" co-producer Walter F. Parks as he unfolds and displays a T-shirt promoting the film that says "In 1994, They Arrive." "Well, that was in 1992 and everybody was very optimistic. Guess what? It's 1997."

But better late than never, "Men in Black," directed by Barry Sonnenfeld ("The Addams Family") from an Ed Solomon ("Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure") script, is about to set your summer atwitter with a hip, tongue-very-much-in-cheek tale of super-secret members of the Men in Black, K (Tommy Lee Jones) and J (Will Smith), who take out the alien garbage on Earth while attempting to stop an intergalactic terrorist from assassinating two alien ambassadors. Providing the atmosphere in a story that revels in '60s delights and paranoia is Production Designer Bo Welch ("Batman Returns") while legendary makeup madman Rick Baker ("Star Wars") combines with the computer hackers at Industrial Light and Magic to create a wacky pack of otherworldly nasties.

Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith pack humorous heat in "Men in Black," the concept of which came from a comic book (below)

Co-producer Laurie MacDonald acknowledges that getting Steven Spielberg as executive producer was a step in the right direction after she and Parks acquired the film rights to Lowell Cunningham's comic in 1992. "Finding a director was going to be tough," she says. "'Men in Black' is comedy, science fiction and gritty cops on the beat all rolled into one. Very few people can do all those things."

But the producers knew one director who fit the bill. If only they could sneak it into his bedroom before bedtime.

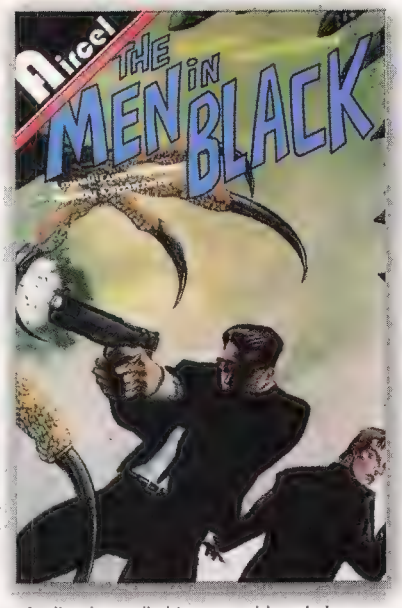
"I read all my scripts at bedtime," chuckles Sonnenfeld. "Sometimes they act like an aphrodisiac. Most of the time they put me to sleep. I loved 'Men in Black' the second I began to read it, because it was a very reality-based story. I don't know whether or not aliens exist. To be perfectly honest, I don't think anybody has a clue as to what's going on. I liked the idea that that was the tone the script took."

The director, who immediately christened the project "'The French Connection' with aliens," just as quickly handed the script to his wife. "She said, 'You have to get Will Smith,' and during the casting process, when we were thinking of everybody from Clint Eastwood to Chris O'Donnell to Keanu Reeves for the two leads, Smith kept coming up as the logical choice to project the energy and excitement for J. At the other end of the spectrum, Tommy Lee Jones turned out to be the perfect burned-out, no-life-force-at-all person to play K."

Bo Welch came aboard with the attitude of "Hey! This looks cool!", getting hot about the idea of creating a retro array of buildings, props and vehicles for a story that had a "drool attitude toward the agents and the aliens" and a bad case of the early '60s. "'Men in Black' is set in a period where we're very much established in the space program and everybody has an optimistic view of the world in general," explains the designer. "Basically I took the notions of the 1962 World's Fair and '60s architecture, mixed in a little space travel and alien influence, and gave everything a vaguely retro look. My take on this world was after you've seen aliens, the last thing on your mind is remodeling your office and keeping trends alive."

Baker, whose description of the hand-in-hand work with Industrial Light and Magic quickly gets too technical for mortal men, says, "This was a fun project because it has a little bit of everything I've done in my life in terms of special effects. We do creature makeups, creatures in suits, big mechanical monsters

and fully articulated monster heads. You name it, we did it."



And, in the process, they populated "Men in Black" with a dizzying array of funny, scary and very different monsters. "And 'different' was the tough part," continues Baker. "We tried to make the aliens not look like all the other aliens we've seen, and that was hard. We'd be sitting around designing things, and somebody would say, 'Hey, doesn't that look like a Klingon?' or 'That's a Borg.' It was difficult simply because so much had been done. But finally, the really bizarre and largely humorous nature of the script pointed us in the right direction."

And humor is ultimately the backbone of "Men in Black," although one could easily keep time to the dance director Sonnenfeld did around the question about funny aliens and, especially, the comparison to the late and largely lamented "Mars Attacks!" "'Men in Black' is actually not a goofy alien movie," he states. "The comedy in this movie is played in a very real way. Things are said in a way that does not acknowledge that things are funny or weird. At least I hope it doesn't come across that way."

What Parks hopes does come across is the innate humanity amid all this alien madness. "The thing that drew us immediately to *The Men in Black* was that it was a comic book that dealt with human characters, rather than monsters or superheroes. We liked the idea of having these cool '50s G-Men kind of guys wandering through all this alien s--- and acting like it was just business as usual. With 'Men in Black,' we feel we have a movie that is not totally dependent on special effects, going into outer space or time travel to hook people. I mean, there's a reason we got great actors for this picture: These are great roles. And the story invites audiences into seeing that there might be a whole new world right outside their door that they never knew existed."

The producer is once again reminded that "Men in Black," which is set for release on July 2, is a little late in taking its act to the big screen. He goes along with the dig by once again hoisting the shirt with the projected '94 opening plastered all over it.

"What can I say?" he laughs. "Everybody goes into these things with the swiftest of intentions. They go to the studio, they shake hands, they say we're going to make a great movie and they say we're going right into production. Well, it took a little longer than that. But hopefully the wait will be worth it." ■

'Men' is comedy, sci-fi and gritty cops rolled into one

CHARACTER PROFILE:

Hellboy

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Hellboy
AGE: summoned to Earth in 1944, exact age unknown
HEIGHT: 5' 9"
WEIGHT: 350 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: Black
EYE COLOR: Red
FIRST APPEARANCE: *John Byrne's Next Men* #21
TITLES CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Hellboy: The Lost Army* and *Hellboy: Almost Colossus*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Hecate, Grigori Efimovich Rasputin, Ilsa Haupstein, Baba Yaga

ORIGIN

Centuries ago in an English village, a woman consorted with the devil in return for power. Attracted by her beauty, the devil granted her the power she desired. As she neared death, however, she renounced the devil. She made her children (a nun and a priest) swear to chain her coffin closed when she died to protect her from the devil, who would surely come to claim her as his own.

After she died, her children did as she asked. The devil appeared the night after her death, and resurrected the woman. He explained to her that when he gave her the power she desired, the power created a part-demon and part-human embryo within her. The devil then took the woman to Hell, where she would eventually give birth.

Hundreds of years later during World War II's closing days, Adolf Hitler enlisted the aid of five German occultists led by the legendary monk Rasputin, self-appointed prophet of the apocalypse, to turn the tide of the war. The five set in motion Project Ragna Rok, named after Norse mythology's doomsday.

An Allied team—made up of U.S. Army personnel and English paranormal experts—learned of Ragna Rok and began an effort to thwart the German crew by diverting the Ragna Rok energies the Germans planned to release. In doing so, the Allied team was nearly killed when a bolt of unknown energy erupted from deep within the Earth. When the smoke cleared, a small, red child with tiny horns, a tail and a large stone gauntlet in place of his right hand, sat before the Allies. The Germans' plan had been foiled.

The boy was named "Hellboy" by the English team, and unofficially adopted by Trevor Bruttenholm, a British paranormal expert. Sometime later, Hellboy became an agent of the Bureau For Paranormal Research and Defense, the world's top paranormal investigation group.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

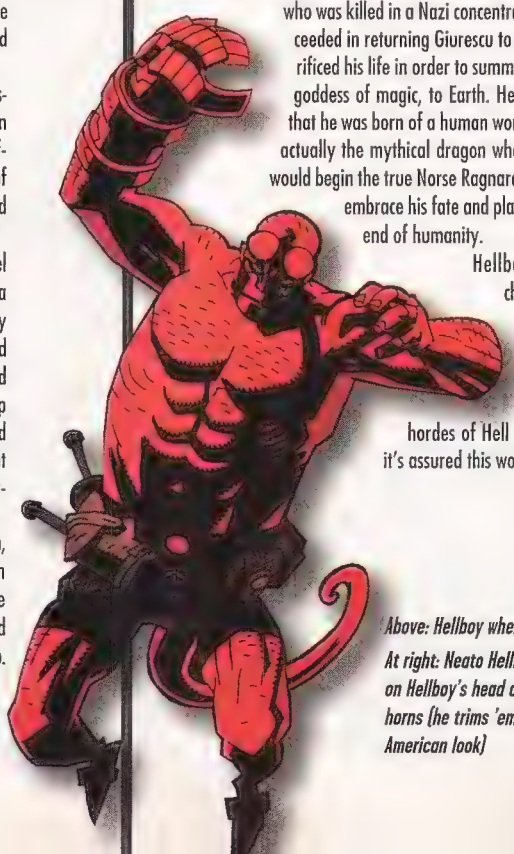
While no official record exists of Hellboy's early years, it is known he has been active in paranormal investigation since at least the late '50s.

Hellboy's first recorded adventure pitted him against Rasputin, still alive after all these years. In an attempt to continue Ragna Rok, the mad monk sought to let loose the seven great beasts of the ancient world, monsters horror novelist H.P. Lovecraft only hinted at. At the cost of Bruttenholm's life, Hellboy, with the aid of fellow BPR&D agents, thwarted Rasputin's schemes to bring the beasts to Earth. As Hellboy was in battle with Rasputin, the monk told Hellboy he knew of his true purpose on Earth, and together, the two could rule the world. Unimpressed, Hellboy destroyed Rasputin, crushing his skull with his stone hand.

Hellboy's other recent adventures have taken him to all corners of the globe, including a battle against a giant werewolf in England and finding a grave for an obstinate Irish corpse which didn't quite know it was dead. In all his adventures, Hellboy has shown himself to be fun-loving to a fault, and more than ready to do whatever it may take to get the job done.

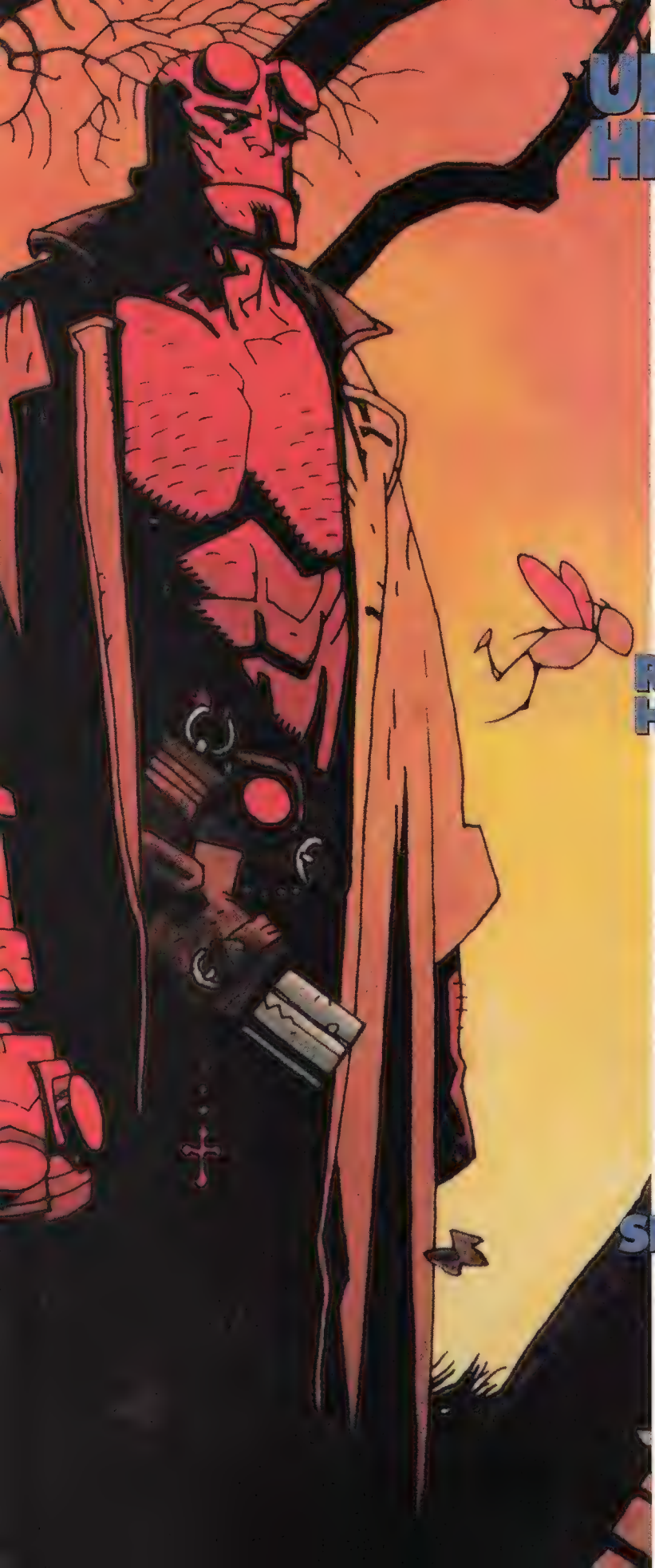
In Hellboy's latest adventure, Rasputin returned again, this time as an evil spirit. Rasputin's German occult team was awakened from cryogenic sleep, and joined forces to resurrect the infamous Romanian vampire Vladimir Giurescu, who was killed in a Nazi concentration camp. The team succeeded in returning Giurescu to life, but the vampire sacrificed his life in order to summon Hecate, the evil Greek goddess of magic, to Earth. Hecate revealed to Hellboy that he was born of a human woman in Hell and that he is actually the mythical dragon whose appearance on Earth would begin the true Norse Ragnarok. Hecate told Hellboy to embrace his fate and play his role in heralding the end of humanity.

Hellboy spurned Hecate and chose his own fate, living as a half-breed demon trying to eke out a normal life in a crazy world. So far, the hordes of Hell have left him alone, but it's assured this won't last for long.



Above: Hellboy when he first appeared on Earth

At right: Neato Hellboy Tidbit—those stumps on Hellboy's head are actually his demonic horns (he trims 'em for that clean-cut, all-American look)



UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Wish there was more *Hellboy* out there? You're not alone. "I wish there was more out there too!" laments Hellboy creator Mike Mignola. "I wish I could draw the stuff faster!" Never fear, though, there's plenty of Hellboy on the horizon, starting with May's *Hellboy: The Lost Army*, a novel written by Christopher Golden, with illustrations by Mignola. "The novel takes place in the '80s, a period of Hellboy's life that I wasn't going to deal with at all," Mignola says. "I told Chris to do whatever he wanted, so he gave Hellboy a love life, something I never would've gotten around to doing."

And then in June is the two-issue comic book mini-series *Hellboy: Almost Colossus*, which is about Hellboy tracking down the homunculus (an artificial person) released in *Hellboy: Wake the Devil #3*, Mignola says. "Liz Sherman's [one of Hellboy's partners] life hangs in the balance because of the damage [the homunculus] inflicted on her, so they have to track it down, and try to figure out how to save Liz."

Also, keep an eye out for a Hellboy/Batman/Starman crossover, and a Hellboy Christmas Special, featuring stories by Gary Gianni, Steve Purcell and Mignola.

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Intrigued by the mystery of Hellboy? Mignola and the folks here at *Wizard* suggest you check out these choice cuts of Hellboy pie:

- ***Hellboy: Seed of Destruction* #1-#4**—Hellboy takes on killer zombie frogs and the evil Rasputin! Also meet the cool-lookin' Abe Sapien, a half-man, half-fish humanoid. Plus: see how Hellboy came to Earth (also available as a trade paperback).
- ***Hellboy: The Corpse and The Iron Shoes***—HB has to bury an uppity corpse in order to save a child from evil leprechauns in this one-shot.
- ***Dark Horse Presents* #100, Part 2** ("The Chained Coffin")—The origin of Hellboy…or is it?
- ***The Savage Dragon* #34-#35**—The Dragon and Hellboy vs. Brainiape, who by the way, has Hitler's brain. Vampires, mummies, and plenty of other paranormals invade Chicago, and it's up to the Dragon and HB to fight them off (Issue #35 features the grossest escape scene in comic book history!).

SIMILAR TASTES

If Hellboy sounds like a dose of the occult you'd like to try, Mignola suggests you take a gander at the following books: *Leave it to Chance* ("It's lighter than the Hellboy stuff, but still a great read."), *Monkeyman and O'Brien*, *Madman* and *The Savage Dragon* ("It's the same treatment of the material, but Dragon is like the superhero version of Hellboy.").

Matthew Brady, also a spawn of the netherworld, doesn't like to trim his horns, which allows him to make all the "horny" jokes he wants.

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MANGA SCENE

By Carl Gustav Horn

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

'Lone Wolf and Cub' revolutionized the U.S. manga craze

Manga in the United States might be very different if not for *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

Thank Frank Miller for helping to bring *Lone Wolf and Cub* to America. While he was doing publicity for his smash hit *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* in 1987, Miller cited *Lone Wolf* as a major influence on his work. That started the buzz. A few months later, the now-defunct First Comics imported *Lone Wolf*, making it the first-ever ongoing manga series published in the United States. In many ways, the comic remains one of the most important and successful manga to be translated for the U.S. market—so much so it paved the way for such popular manga series as *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* to reach America.

Written by Kazuo Koike (*Crying Freeman*) and drawn by Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf* is different from most of the manga American readers are used to. *Lone Wolf* was a classic that achieved fame in Japan, while most translated manga are minor Japanese successes chosen for their perceived ability to appeal to American tastes. It was Miller's endorsement that gave *Lone Wolf* its initial boost in the States; it didn't hurt that he and his *Dark Knight Returns* coloring partner Lynn Varley drew original covers for the first 12 issues.

Lone Wolf and Cub inspired writer/artist Frank Miller, who contributed the covers to the first 12 American issues

Itto Ogami is the assassin known as "Lone Wolf" (with son Daigoro)

Set during Japan's feudal samurai period, *Lone Wolf and Cub* tells the story of Itto Ogami. Once he was the court executioner for his clan's Shogun (a Japanese military dictator), but Ogami is framed for treason by the rival Yagyu clan, who murders his family. Ogami flees and wanders Japan, pushing his surviving young son in a baby cart, the two reborn as "Lone Wolf and Cub." Ogami now kills for the price of 500 gold pieces, surviving as an assassin until the day he can get his revenge.

If *Lone Wolf* was in color, there'd be lots of red

Koike's story concepts are often amazing, even shocking to the American reader. One that stands out in particular occurs in issue #3 where the Lone Wolf is hired by local officials to slay a Buddhist priest. The priest keeps on the local lords to stop taxing the peasants into starvation and is revered by peasants as a "living Buddha" who is believed to be impervious to harm. The local lords figure if the priest is shown to be mortal—i.e., by assassinating him—the peasants will lose faith and be cowed into submission. When Ogami finally confronts the priest, the priest teaches Ogami that he, too, can achieve enlightenment on the "assassin's road," quoting the famous Zen Buddhist scripture, "When you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha." Armed with this philosophy, Ogami slices the priest lengthwise (This is a commentary on the belief that since a samurai's life is brutally violent, this Zen spiritualism acts as almost a justification of his government-sponsored actions.). It's an extreme, yet real, expression of traditional Japanese spirituality.

Lone Wolf also portrays many characters following other philosophical paths; some are sickened by their violent, hypocritical society, while others have the license to kill and to kill one's self—the power and the price that comes with being born a samurai.

Many other stories also revolve around strange and bizarre historical details that figure in the Lone Wolf's missions. You'll learn about what the *yakuza*, the Japanese mafia, were like back when they carried swords, not automatics. And about the special ninja corps who guarded witnesses in political trials, sword techniques such as "soaring lark" and vicious martial arts weapons like the "thousand-power chain" (a compact bola-type weapon). Each issue of *Lone Wolf* truly puts the reader into another world.

While manga artists such as Katsuhiro Otomo (*Akira*, *Domu*) or Masamune Shirow (*Ghost in the Shell*) use a clean-line art style or intricate tonework to portray manga stories set in the future or present, Kojima takes a quite different art style to portray Japan's violent past in *Lone Wolf and Cub*. "Slash and burn" is the way to describe Kojima's art. "Slash," comes from his vigorous and tough linework. When he shades with lines, he doesn't care if the lines are all the same thickness—they race with rough fury so that an onrushing swordsman seems to be one with the wind behind him. "Burn," shows in his dark, flamelike brushwork. Kojima's brush makes *Lone Wolf*'s seas seethe, skies boil and, of course, its blood gush, gout and spray.

American giant Miller, who has himself popularized new directions in black-and-white comics art with his *Sin City*, doesn't hold back any praise for Kojima's art work, saying there is "grace, power and utter vitality present in the drawings…Kojima's lines streak across the page, blurring the figures into naked speed and power. All this, and more, he achieves without sacrificing clarity. His staging is meticulous and unerring…faultless visual storytelling."

With a recommendation like that, what are you waiting for? If manga is your time machine, then it's time to set it backwards and return to check out the masterpiece that is *Lone Wolf and Cub*. But don't forget to bring a tourniquet.

Carl Horn's seas seethe, skies boil and, of course, his blood gushes, gouts and sprays.

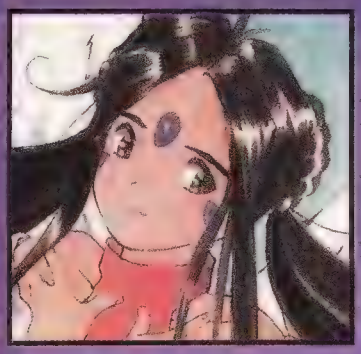
F.Y.I.

The complete *Lone Wolf and Cub* story can only be had in its original Japanese version, which consists of 28 collected volumes totaling 8,400 pages. Despite the 45 thick issues put out by First Comics from 1987 to 1991, the English version of *Lone Wolf* totaled only about one-third of the original saga. Except for one trade paperback ($19.95) reprinting the first six issues, there were no English collections of *Lone Wolf*. But the squarebound original issues can often be had in back-issue bins for cover price. Also, check out the six *Lone Wolf* live-action movies, based directly on the manga stories. The first two are now available in new subtitled releases from AnimEigo, each $29.95.

MANGA 101

"Big Eyes"

Considered a visual cornerstone of manga and anime, "big eyes" were started by modern manga founder Osamu Tezuka (*Adolf*) in the late 1940s. Ironically, the style was inspired by the American animated films by Walt Disney Studios. While plenty of manga *don't* use big eyes—look at *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Akira*—many Japanese creators find them to be expressive and attractive.



MARVEL GOES MANGA!

Move over *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*, there's new manga monsters hitting America. And their names are…X-Men and Spider-Man?

You heard right. With the growing mania for Japanese comic books in America, Marvel is returning to imported comics with Marvel Import, a new line devoted to bringing foreign-licensed, foreign-created Marvel stories to the U.S.

"We've been licensing our characters to foreign publishers for years to let them do their own Marvel stories," says Marvel Publisher Shirrel Rhoades. "There's been a lot of great stuff created and it's time we brought some of it back."

The Marvel Import line debuts in August with two Japanese books translated into English, tentatively titled *X-Men Manga* and *Spider-Man Manga*. "A lot of our editorial staff members are fans of manga," Marvel Marketing Manager John Dokes says, "and some of our artists like Ed McGuinness (*Deadpool*) and Joe Madureira (*Uncanny X-Men*) draw in a very manga-influenced style. So we figured we'd go the next step. We've got manga being published. Let's bring it over here."

The manga version of Spider-Man

Actual format, including page counts and cover prices on the books, is yet to be determined. But Dokes assures readers that "we'll stay as true to the originals as possible. Original black-and-white manga will be kept black-and-white." Translations will be as exact as possible and art revisions will be almost non-existent, even though manga has a reputation for over-the-top violence. "We've kept a close eye on how our characters have behaved in Japan," says Dokes, "to make sure it's consistent with how we like them to behave."

The translated *X-Men Manga* hits America in August

So Marvel's only problem may be deciding what to choose. "The foreign publishers have been doing these stories for years," Dokes continues. "We've got a big backlog of great Japanese stuff to choose from. We're going to be bringing the manga fast and furious." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH

Must-read manga books shipping in May

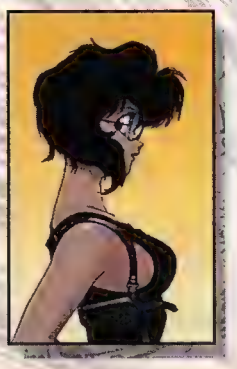
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL: CALL OF THE WORM #2 (OF 3)

Dark Horse

The blood worms living underneath Manji's skin have protected him from death—kept him from his eternal rest—while he repays his debt of slaying 1,000 evil men. But now a rival immortal, Shizuma, has poisoned those blood worms, and all of Manji's old wounds are bursting open. If he dies this day, he dies with foul dishonor. And that is not a death that Manji will accept!

GUNSMITH CATS: SHADES OF GREY #1

Dark Horse



The only thing Grey's got against Rally Vincent is that she blew off his left hand with a shotgun. But you can't keep a good thug down—or in the clink. That's what Rally's afraid of, and when a dude named Jim Logan offers to exchange info on Grey's impending jail break in return for Rally doing a number on the two guys after Logan, the deal looks bad from every angle…. By Kenichi Sonoda.

MAISON IKKOKU: INTENSIVE CARE

Viz

This is the seventh graphic novel in the *Maison Ikkoku* series, collecting the second half of part five of the series. Got all that? Then get this: Yusaku, a college student, is desperately in love with the beautiful young widow, Kyoko, who runs his boarding house. When he and his rival, the handsome tennis coach Shun, are both laid up in the hospital with broken legs, the sympathy visits they receive from pretty girls isn't going to do either of them any good with Kyoko…. By Rumiko Takahashi

ROBOTECH #2

Antarctic

Part two of this three-issue, all-original *Robotech* story is set within the Macross timeline. The Zentraedi battle group lures the SDF-1 into a trap over the storms of Jupiter, and neither Commander Fokker's fighter squadron nor the SDF-1's main gun will be enough to get out of it. Written by Fred Perry with full-color artwork by Ben Dunn (*Ninja High School*) and Ted Nomura (*Tigers of Terra*), who contributes a bonus technical backstory.

by Joyce M. Steel

Preview 'Batman & Robin' in May

May will see a slew of card sets straight from Tinseltown! Fleer/SkyBox is up first with what'll probably be the hottest set of the summer, based on the upcoming fourth Batman flick. *"Batman & Robin" Premium Trading Cards* will be released in May to preview the June movie, which stars "ER" stud George Clooney as the new Batman, muscleman Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze, Chris O'Donnell as Robin, Uma Thurman as Poison Ivy and Alicia Silverstone as Batgirl. The basic set includes 66 story cards and 24 pre-production art cards—one in every pack. Chase cards include 12 Character Profile cards (1 chase card for every 3 packs), six Mini-Poster cards (1:6) and six Celluloid Action cards (1:24). The mother of all chase cards is the hobby-exclusive Autographed Cards set, hand-signed by the Batman stars and the film's famed director Joel Schumacher (1:720) (six cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.49).

ANIMATED 'HERCULES'

The Fleer folks are workin' overtime this month, as they release a set based on June's other giant silver-screen release, Disney's newest animated feature-length film "Hercules." The set features 70 regular cards, 10 Pop-Out cards, 10 Coloring Puzzle cards, two Mini-Magazines and three levels of bonus cards: six Sticker Cards (1:3), six gold-foil embossed Coin Cards (1:9), and two Sculpted Hologram cards (1:24) (nine cards per pack, suggested retail $1.49).

'THE LOST WORLD' OF CARDS

For a triple feature, check out the newest card series from Topps featuring "The Lost World," the cool sequel to 1993's mega-blockbuster "Jurassic Park." The Steven Spielberg-directed "The Lost World" showcases eight new dinosaur characters and more visual effects than the first film—not to mention the new film spawned this wild-looking 72-card set, which highlights stills from the flick and includes a bonus dinosaur sticker in every pack (six cards, one sticker per pack, suggested retail $.99).

GHOST-LY IMAGES

From Hollywood to "Comicdom," Comic Images sets its sights on a nifty Dark Horse comic this month. *Dark Horse Presents: Ghost Collector Cards* traces the tale of Elisa Cameron, a former investigative reporter who, after being murdered by one of her "subjects," comes back for some heavy-duty haunting. The 72-card series is printed on 24-pt. stock, chased by six Chromium Cards (1:18) and includes randomly inserted Eric Luke [writer of *Ghost*] Autographed Cards (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.50).

ONE FUN, SWORD-WIELDING NUN

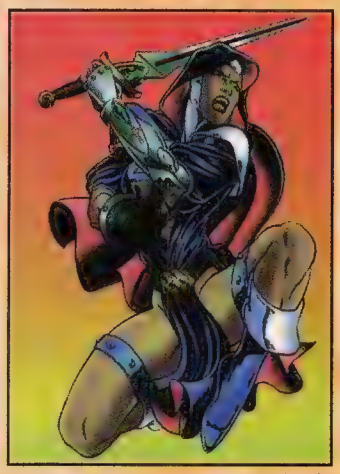
For the birth announcement portion of our column, the card-collectin' world welcomes Bolt Entertainment, a new manufacturer whose first series debuts this month. Bolt introduces *Warrior Nun Areala* cards, based on the fan-favorite comic, which include 90 regular cards, along with five foil cards (three per box), four signed cards (two per box) and—an industry first—nine different white leather cards (two per case) (eight cards per pack, no established suggested retail).

DILBERT'S COLLECTIBLE CARD GAME

Finally, the giggle-of-the-month goes to Wizards of the Coast, whose new CCG offers working stiffs everywhere a way to vent those big-business frustrations. It's The *Corporate Shuffle* starring superstar funny man Dilbert and his gang. The object of the new CCG, besides havin' fun, is to beat your co-workers up the corporate ladder and become the "Big Boss." Ain't it always (60-card basic set, suggested retail $11.95).

Joyce Steel is hastily trying to climb the corporate ladder while having fun…hee hee, too bad we greased the ladder.

"I shot an arrow in the air…with luck it hit Pauly Shore right in the butt." **Hercules trading cards**



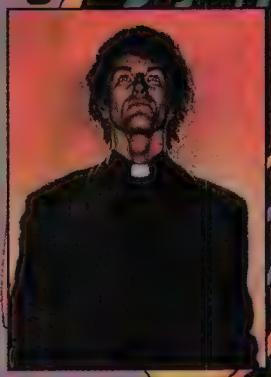
"Blessed are the meek, for I may cut their heads off more easily." **Warrior Nun Areala cards**

"I'd step over my own mom for a corner office. Uhh, mom?" **The Corporate Shuffle collectible card game**

WIZARD #71

Summer BLAST!

BATMAN Cover by Joe Quesada!



Or the PREACHER Cover by Glenn Fabry!

FREE Vampirella Chromium Card!

FREE Deadpool Poster!

TALES OF THE WITCHBLADE #1/2

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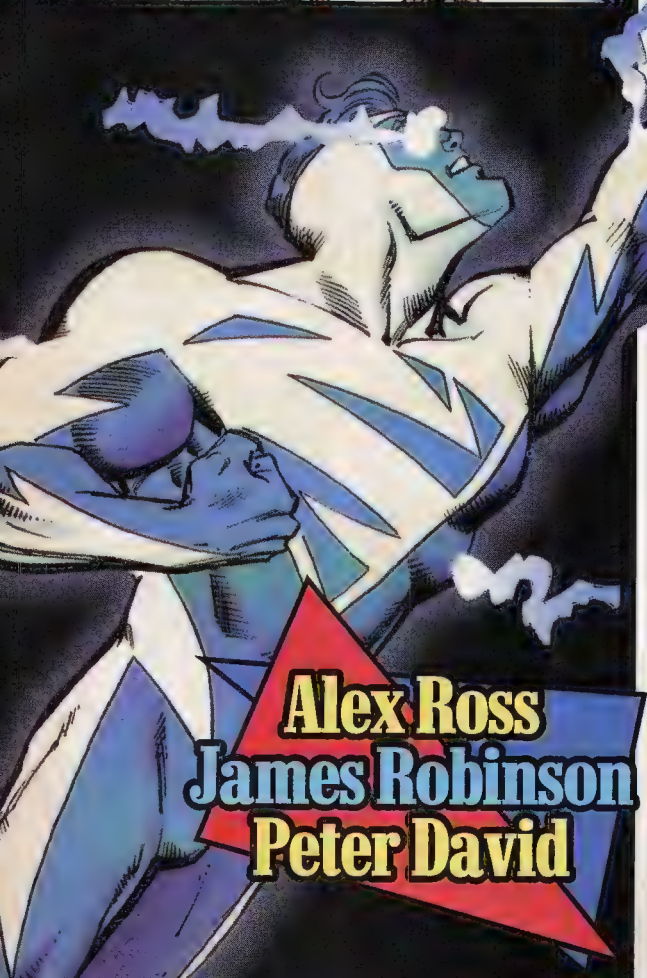

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Frank Miller

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Michael Turner
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Jackie Chan's Spartan X Extravaganza!

CONTEST

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First Prize (4): Four readers will receive a Jackie Chan T-shirt, plus signed copies of *Jackie Chan's Spartan X* comic book!

Second Prize (10): Ten readers will receive a Jackie Chan polarized watch!

Third Prize (10): Ten readers will receive Jackie Chan coffee mugs.

Prizes courtesy of Ztarz Catalogue: purveyors of the hottest collection of authentic souvenirs celebrating the films of Jackie Chan and the rest of your favorite Chinese action stars. To get your free catalogue write to Ztarz, 412-416 World Commerce Centre, 11 Canton Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong, send E-mail to: info@ztarz.com or access our Website at www.ztarz.com.

This contest is sponsored by Topps Comics and Media Asia.

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: *Jackie Chan's Spartan X* Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is June 30, 1997.

Legal Stunts

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Topps Comics, Media Asia, their immediate families or Bruce Leroy from "The Last Dragon." Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Jackie Chan's Spartan X Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Speaking of "The Last Dragon," whatever happened El DeBarge? Was he beaten to the rhythm of the night? Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected randomly from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on July 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after July 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: *Jackie Chan's Spartan X* Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Spartan X Extravaganza Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JUNE 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

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Phone Number (with area code) _____

What other Topps Comics do you enjoy? _____

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are April's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. DARKCHYLDE #1

WRITER: Randy Queen ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

EEEYOW! That Darkchylde chickee sure is hot these days! Heck, she's hotter than Georgia asphalt! She's hotter than Tabasco-soaked jalapeños! She's hotter than an unventilated high school football team's locker room on a muggy August afternoon! So what contributes to this Darkchylde hot-itude? A few things: Stunning artwork by Randy Queen, legs that go up to her neck and a book that people found out about too late. Yep, when *Darkchylde* #1 hit stores in the summer of '96, not too many people knew about it. Now every geek worth his zits wishes he would've made Ms. Ariel Chylde's acquaintance just a little bit earlier. **LAST MONTH: 2**

2. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z. ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

And right behind *Darkchylde* on the hot-o-meter is Top Cow Productions in general. Heck, the company's got the #2, #3 and #4 slots all sewn up and to itself this month. Leading the charge of bovine love is, as usual, *Witchblade*. And for those of you scoring at home, this makes six months in a row that *Witchblade* #1 has been in the #1 or #2 slot on our little countdown. Six months! That's enough time to have two-thirds of a baby! Enough time to flunk a whole semester of algebra! That's half a year of back-issue dominance! Or 15,552,000 seconds, if you prefer. That's a long while. **LAST MONTH: 1**

3. THE DARKNESS #1 (BLACK VARIANT COVER)

WRITER: Garth Ennis

ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

Since the power that powers Jackie Estacado (The Darkness) is kind of the opposite of the power that powers Sara Pezzini (Witchblade), then we guess it's kinda appropriate that *Darkness* #1 follows *Witchblade* #1. After all, Witchblade came first. And *Witchblade* #1 gained prominence without the use of a one-in-four "Black" variant cover like the one shown here. And, after all, "ladies first" is the rule that all true gentlemen should follow. Hey, Estacado may be a hitman killer guy, but he's still a nice fella. **LAST MONTH: 6**

NUMBER THREE

NUMBER FOUR

4. WITCHBLADE #10 (DARKNESS #0 VARIANT COVER)

WRITERS: David Wohl and Christina Z.

ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri, Michael Turner, D-Tron and Batt

Whoa! With a *Witchblade* here and a *Witchblade* there and a *Darkness* in the middle, it looks like The Darkness gets to be the meat in a Witchblade sammich. Now *that's* a pretty nice place to be! And it all makes sense, 'cause *Witchblade* #10 is all the rage these days since it holds the first appearance of The Darkness between its covers. Oh, yeah. Between Witchblade's covers—that's another good place to be. **LAST MONTH: 3**

5. PREACHER #1

NUMBER FIVE

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

The neato thing about *Preacher* is that it finds a new and different way to shock the bloody bejeezus out of you every month. God goes AWOL from Heaven? That's a good one. Kid blows half his face off with a shotgun and is left a drooling mess? Another doozy. Church blows up? Always good for shock value. The kicker to all this? All these wholesome events can be found between the covers of *Preacher* #1. Now those are some covers we'd like to stay out of. **LAST MONTH: 4**

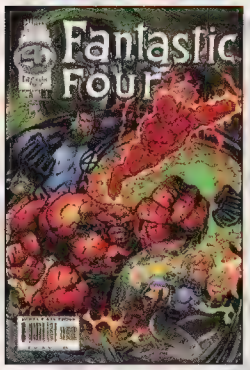
6. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Get a crazed Scotsman with a peculiar bent on reality (like, say, Grant Morrison) to write it. Get a hyperkinetic up-and-comer with a funky angular style (like, say, Howard Porter) to pencil it. Get an ink guy with lots of pens and brushes (like, say, John Dell) to ink it. Staff it with DC's A-list (like, say, Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, Aquaman and friends) to staff it. What do you get? The new *JLA*. What else do you get? A sure-fire hit. **LAST MONTH: 7**

NUMBER SIX

7. FANTASTIC FOUR #1



NUMBER SEVEN

WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

Figure this: Reed Richards is supposed to be, like, the smartest guy on Earth. He's supposed to be, like, Albert Einstein on brain steroids. So he blasts off to investigate some "stellar anomaly" IN AN UNTESTED PROTOTYPE SPACECRAFT? Guess so. Now, he intended on bringing an experienced pilot, Ben Grimm, with him. That makes sense. But Reed also winds up BRINGING HIS GIRLFRIEND AND HER KID BROTHER? And this guy's supposed to be *smart*? Looks like the more things change in the "Heroes Reborn" universe, the more they stay the same. **LAST MONTH: 8**

8. DARKCHYLDE #2

WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

As near as we can tell, it goes like this: Ariel Chylde is a teenager trying to get adjusted to life in a new town. But one night, as her father tries to abuse her, she accidentally channels some big, foul-smellin' netherworld demon in an effort to protect herself, kills Daddy and burns her own house to the ground. Yow. That's a little tougher than the standard first-day-at-school problems one usually encounters, like missing the bus and not being able to find the cafeteria. **LAST MONTH: 10**

NUMBER EIGHT

9. HITMAN #1

NUMBER NINE

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: John McCrea

We like Hitman. Why? 'Cause he makes sense. He's got X-ray vision and the ability to read minds. So he uses his X-ray vision to look through women's clothes. He reads minds to find out what women are thinking, for the express purpose of scoring more efficiently. And he uses both powers to blow away bad guys that he's been contracted to rub out so he can make money and keep himself in bacon 'n' beans. Now *that's* the kind of realism you don't find often in comics these days. **LAST MONTH: 9**

10. LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #1

WRITER: James Robinson
ARTIST: Paul Smith

The Falconer family has been the mystical protectors of the town of Devil's Echo for generations. The "mystical protector" job (which comes with a spiffy-lookin' shirt with your name embroidered on it, a discount card good for 10% off at Stop 'n' Shop and a dental plan) is handled by the first-born Falconer son. The problem? Lucas Falconer only has a daughter. And they won't let li'l Chance Falconer play their reindeer games, 'cause she's a girl. So she heads out to show that girls can whip ass too. **LAST MONTH: 11**

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. PREACHER #2 DC
12. IRON MAN #2 MARVEL
13. WITCHBLADE #2 IMAGE
14. CURSE OF THE SPAWN #1 IMAGE
15. S. IN PARADISE #1 HOMAGE
16. SUPERGIRL #1 DC
17. FANTASTIC FOUR #2 MARVEL
18. KINGDOM COME #1 DC
19. KA-ZAR #1 MARVEL
20. DAWN #1 SIRIUS

MARKET WATCH

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · by Jon Warren and the *Wizard* staff

SUPER SALES FOLLOW NEW LOOK

Fan reaction to Superman's new costume debut in *Superman* #123 has been mixed, but the changeover issues sold very well for most retailers (sales for all of the Supertitles doubled in some areas). Most retailers expect sales to remain at around current levels, at least through June of next year, when it's expected that the "old" Superman and original costume will return just in time for the Man of Steel's colossal 60th anniversary. (Hey, wanna bet he's on the cover of *Action* lifting a car?) Far from feeling manipulated by the new look, retailers report that fans instead look forward to a year-long, self-contained storyline that is moving toward a definite conclusion. And maybe we can count on DC to throw in a *little bit* of a twist when things are set right for Supes again.

Jungle Fever

The surprise hit of the last couple of months just has to be *Ka-Zar* #1. Yeah, we knew it would be a great book, with Mark Waid writing and Andy Kubert drawing it, but the ol' jungle lord's never been a fan favorite, and Marvel actually made things worse by soliciting the book as an X-Men title, where it was lost in the glut of X-whatever books. It wasn't until fans actually saw the book on the stands that the excitement over the younger-looking, updated-for-the-'90s hero began, and now this seriously underordered book is seriously *hot*. If you can still find a copy at cover price (or a copy, *period*), buy it quick!

Mark Waid and Andy Kubert's fresh take on Ka-Zar has made his book a breakout hit

DC has seen solid success with Superman's big switch

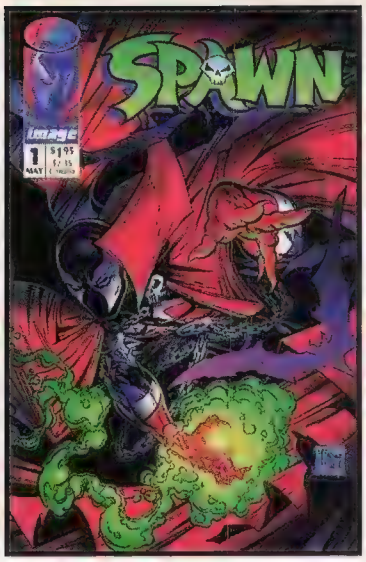
Darkness Doesn't Fall

Looks like the wildness over *The Darkness* is for real! Retailers tell us that sales have increased with every issue—something exceptionally rare in today's market—and the clamor for back issues continues to grow. We agree with Steven Huber of Galaxy Comics in Richmond, Ind.: "What can you say? The combination of Ennis and Silvestri sold the book before it ever came out." Looks like Top Cow has another hit on its hands to go along with *Witchblade*.

And speaking of our mystically armored heroine, the first issue of *Witchblade* is topping out at 15 to 25 percent over guide, especially at East Coast shops, and the story and art just keeps getting better with every issue! Top Cow's promises to fans—great art and stories, consistency of product, and on-time shipping—have paid off for the company in spades.

JLA: Silver Age Heat

With the resurgence of heroes (or at least their names) like Flash, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, the Teen Titans and the Justice League, Silver Age DC comics starring them are becoming hotter, as they grow harder and harder to find. Dave Braunstein of Eldorado Comics in Cherry Hill, N.J., says, "1960s DCs [with 10-cent and 12-cent cover prices] are good sellers in any grade when priced accordingly. And they're a bargain when compared to Marvels of similar grades from the same era."



As Spawn's movie and TV show approach, look for his back issues to get even hotter

Spawn Hunting

It's definitely time to check out your *Spawn* collections and fill in any holes—the big Spawn movie is right around the corner (as is the HBO animated series). Movie industry insiders don't expect the Spawn movie to be a blockbuster on the order of "Batman & Robin," simply because the character doesn't have huge name-recognition among the general public. But then again, neither did "The Crow" or "The Mask," and those movies made sacks of scratch. Anyway, you can look for back-issue prices to go up, and if the August release is a big hit, *way up*—so now's the time to buy.

No. 2 Crush

The second-issue hoodoo strikes again! It's a well-known fact that many retailers cut their orders by as much as 50 percent from a #1 issue to a #2 (and maybe less for #3) of any new comic. It's not unusual to find #2s in shorter supply, and greater demand, than many #1s. Recent examples: While *JLA* #1 fetches $9, issue #2 is going for as much as $12 in many areas, and #3 has been seen going for $8. Also, all of the #2-#4 "Heroes Reborn" books (*Fantastic Four*, *Captain America*, *Iron Man* and *Avengers*) are in short supply because of comic stores' difficulty in reordering, and can command as much as $10-$12 (and more for variant covers). Don't pass up those #2s! **W**

Jon Warren also doesn't have huge name-recognition among the general public, but he doesn't make sacks of scratch.

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

1. Garth Ennis — *Preacher, Hitman*
2. Mark Waid — *Ka-Zar, Flash*
3. Peter David — *Hulk, Aquaman, Supergirl*
4. Scott Lobdell — *Generation X, Uncanny X-Men*
5. Grant Morrison — *JLA*
6. Frank Miller — *Sin City*
7. Kurt Busiek — *Astro City, Thunderbolts*
8. David Wohl — *Witchblade*
9. James Robinson — *Starman; upcoming: Cable*
10. Erik Larsen — *Savage Dragon*

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

1. Jim Lee — *Fantastic Four*
2. Joe Madureira — *Uncanny X-Men*
3. J. Scott Campbell — *Gen13*
4. Michael Turner — *Witchblade*
5. Andy Kubert — *Ka-Zar*
6. Carlos Pacheco — *X-Men*
7. Humberto Ramos — *DV8*
8. Joe Quesada — *Ash*
9. Alex Ross — *Kingdom Come*
10. Randy Queen — *Darkchylde*

*** Pencilers and painters**

***Wizard*'s Top Ten Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

Wizard's Up & Coming Creator

OSCAR JIMENEZ

Fans of DC's *Flash* series have this artist to thank for bringing a brand-new, extremely lively look to the hero. During Jimenez's "run" from issue #101 to #116, his speedster had an always-in-motion, energized look. In addition to his innovative ways of drawing speed lines, Jimenez knows when a light, airy set of lines are needed (like when he presented cityscapes of the future, or a romantic scene between Wally and Linda). You can catch Jimenez's work on some upcoming *JLA* fill-in issues and some WildStorm titles. *Flash* Editor Paul Kupperberg says, "I like the realism of Oscar's characters, his attention to detail and his fluid, graceful style. He makes each story jump out, and knows how to make situations and characters come alive."

■ *Marc Wilkofsky*

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of MARCH.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for March. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**).

1. **Superman #123 Collector's Ed. (DC)**
2. Uncanny X-Men #344 (Marvel)
3. X-Men #64 (Marvel)
4. **Spawn #60 (Image)**
5. Fantastic Four #7 (Marvel)
6. Wolverine #113 (Marvel)
7. Iron Man #7 (Marvel)
8. **Adventures of Superman #546 (DC)**
9. Avengers #7 (Marvel)
10. **Curse of the Spawn #7 (Image)**
11. **Action Comics #733 (DC)**
12. X-Men '97 (Marvel)
13. Generation X #27 (Marvel)
14. **Witchblade #13 (Image)**
15. **Captain America #7 (Marvel)**
16. **Superman: The Man of Steel #67 (DC)**
17. The Darkness #4 (Image)
18. **JLA #5 (DC)**
19. X-Man #27 (Marvel)
20. X-Factor #134 (Marvel)
21. X-Force #66 (Marvel)
22. Cable #43 (Marvel)
23. **Arcanum #1 (Image)**
24. **Batman vs. Aliens #1 (Dark Horse)**
25. Excalibur #109 (Marvel)
26. Amazing Spider-Man #423 (Marvel)
27. **P. Jane vs. The Darkness: Stripper #1 (Event)**
28. Gen^{13} Bootleg #5 (Image)
29. Incredible Hulk #453 (Marvel)
30. **Beast #1 (Marvel)**
31. Peter Parker, Spider-Man #80 (Marvel)
32. Batman #542 (DC)
33. Spectacular Spider-Man #246 (Marvel)
34. **Sin City: Sex & Violence (Dark Horse)**
35. The X-Files #28 (Topps)
36. Sensational Spider-Man #16 (Marvel)
37. Detective Comics #709 (DC)
38. Darkchylde #5 (Image)
39. Supergirl #9 (DC)
40. Deadpool #5 (Marvel)
41. WildC.A.T.s #36 (Image)
42. Batman: The Long Halloween #6 (DC)
43. Superman #123 Standard Edition (DC)
44. **Preacher #25 (DC)**
45. Thunderbolts #2 (Marvel)
46. Pitt #13 (Full Bleed)
47. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #94 (DC)
48. DV8 #6 (Image)
49. Green Lantern #86 (DC)
50. **Azrael/Ash (DC)**
51. Incredible Hulk '97 (Marvel)
52. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #62 (DC)
53. Nightwing #8 (DC)
54. Astro City (vol. 2) #8 (Image)
55. Batman/Wildcat #2 (DC)
56. **Ka-Zar #1 (Marvel)**
57. Spider-Man/Badrock #1 (Maximum)
58. Catwoman #45 (DC)
59. Robin #41 (DC)
60. The Flash #125 (DC)
61. Spider-Man/Badrock #2 (Maximum)
62. Elektra #7 (Marvel)
63. Spider-Man Unlimited #16 (Marvel)
64. The Tenth #2 (Image)
65. Unknown Soldier #2 (DC)
66. **Savant Garde #1 (Image)**
67. Cyberforce #32 (Image)
68. S. Wars: A New Hope—Spec. Edition #3 (D.H.)
69. Adventures in the DC Universe #1 (DC)
70. Wonder Woman #121 (DC)
71. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #21 (Marvel)
72. The Dreaming #12 (DC)
73. Azrael #29 (DC)
74. Hellshock #3 (Image)
75. The Maxx #29 (Image)
76. Classic S. Wars: H. Solo at Star's End #1 (D.H.)
77. **Suspira: The Great Working #1 (Chaos!)**
78. Silver Surfer #128 (Marvel)
79. WetWorks #27 (Image)
80. Teen Titans #8 (DC)
81. Adventures in the DC Universe #2 (DC)
82. Resurrection Man #1 (DC)
83. **Impulse #25 (DC)**
84. Anarky #1 (DC)
85. Superboy #39 (DC)
86. Aquaman #32 (DC)
87. Daredevil #364 (Marvel)
88. Venom: On Trial #3 (Marvel)
89. Hitman #14 (DC)
90. **Starman #30 (DC)**
91. Shi: Rekishi #2 (Crusade)
92. Bone #28 (Cartoon Books)
93. Chastity #2 (Chaos!)
94. Journey into Mystery #509 (Marvel)
95. Code of Honor #4 (Marvel)
96. Savage Dragon #37 (Image)
97. The Books of Magic #36 (DC)
98. Mars Attacks The Image Universe #4 (Image)
99. **Strangers in Paradise (vol. 3) #5 (Image)**
100. The Books of Faerie #3 (DC)

AT THE TOP:

DC scored extremely well with its latest huge promotion: the much-publicized transformation of Superman into an energy being with a brand-new costume. Not only did the collector's version of the Big Change Issue, *Superman*#123, hit #1, but its surrounding issues, *Adventures of Superman*#546, *Action*#733 and *Man of Steel*#67 all made the Top 20, even beating the still-strong *JLA*. Now we'll have to see if this Superexcitement keeps going. Thanks to the steady *Curse*, Spawn has two regular Top 10ers these days, and his upcoming big-screen film and animated series will probably increase both books' sales even more. At the rate she's going (check out her four-point jump this month), Witchblade may become 1997's top-selling heroine; more and more fans are discovering that her solid stories justify her book's heavy hype. While his fellow "Reborn" heroes stayed in the Top 10, Captain America dropped to #15, but his title's new creators, James Robinson and Joe Bennett, should give him a good push.

IN THE MIDDLE:

Many Top Cow fans were willing to try out the company's latest series, Brandon Peterson's *Arcanum*, possibly thinking it'll be the next *Darkness*. Event's four-cover crossover between its new character Painkiller Jane and the Darkness gave the company Top 30 greatness. *Batman vs. Aliens* brought sizable order numbers to Batman, Aliens and Dark Horse—proving you can't go wrong blending a major superhero with a megapopular sci-fi product, especially when you bring in top-name creators like Ron Marz and Bernie Wrightson. Despite its $2.50-a-pop price, Beast's mini-series started out well sales-wise. Frank Miller's *Sin City* returned in successful style; his many fans couldn't wait to read about his new character, Delia. *Preacher* continued its Top 100 rise, as issue #25's jumping-on-point story pulled in some new readers. Retailers knew *Azrael/Ash* would burn up their racks and ordered accordingly, giving both heroes excellent sales figures.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Marvel, Image, Chaos! and DC each had some good-news chartmakers: Fandom's obviously more than ready for Mark Waid and Andy Kubert's revamp of Ka-Zar, the *WildC.A.T.s* team-book spinoff *Savant Garde* was favorably received, many folks gave the fully painted *Lady Death* spinoff *Suspira* a try, and *Impulse* is winning over new readers and chart-hopping at a fine pace (DC's new promotion of the book has helped). Also, DC's *Starman* stayed on the chart after its February triumph, and Jim Lee's Homage Comics imprint has succeeded in bringing *Strangers in Paradise* to Top 100 Land.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: **WizardTGTC@aol.com**

ToyFare™

THE GUIDE TO COLLECTIBLE TOYS

Goes monthly in July!

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By WIZARD®

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survey: issue 70

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & CONCERNS

We want to know what you like about this li'l mag of ours. Tell us what you thought about this particular issue of *WIZARD*, what you liked best, and what sucked sour frog-ass. (Use extra paper if you're one of them long-winded types.)

PRICE CHANGES

Are books selling in your area for a lot more or a lot less than *WIZARD* is listing them at?
If they are, we wanna know. List any major discrepancies you feel exist in the *WIZARD* price guide.
(Use extra paper if necessary.)

Title	Issue #	What it sells for in your area

TOP TEN HOTTEST COMICS

What do you see as the hottest comics among the circle of friends you hang out with? List them below, with the hottest book at the number one slot.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Who is your favorite comic book artist? Actually, we wanna know who your top 10 favorite artists are. List your favorite artist in the number one slot, followed by your second favorite artist, etc.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Hang in there; we're almost done. What we need now is the list of your 10 favorite comic book writers.
You know the drill: your favorite in pole position, with your second favorite at number two, yadda, yadda, yadda.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

let your voice be heard

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We need your help. Y'see, the only way to keep improving the WIZARD price guide is to keep in touch with the thousands of comic book fans that make this industry what it is. So, we need you to take a couple of minutes and fill out the survey on the left and mail this page to us. And heck, by helping us make a better mag, you'll *get* a better mag! (See? It all works out in the end.) Oh, and feel free to photocopy this page if you don't feel like destroying this issue.

WHO ARE YOU?

Name (please print)

Address

City State

Zip Age

e-mail address (if you got one)

MAIL SURVEY TO:

Jon R. Warren
c/o WIZARD P.G. Surveys
2401 Broad St.
Chattanooga, TN 37408
e-mail: JonRWarren@aol.com

BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Stone Boy welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

It's time once again to rate your mental abilities, using what we affectionately call the "CBIQ." We will now compare your mental strength against lame modes of superhero transportation. The better you do, the more likely you'd rather have your parents drop you off than ride in one of these nuclear-powered deathtraps.

Score	Rank
0-4	**Fantastic car:** A convertible…in New York?!?
5-14	**Pogoplane:** Another Fantastic Four vehicle, the Pogoplane struck fear into the hearts of evildoers everywhere with its pogo-cannon and…uh, pogo-guns. Or something.
15-19	**Spider-Mobile:** Also called the "Spider-Buggy." Also called "ass."
20	**Whiz Wagon:** No wonder the Guardian's trunks are yellow.

1. Besides the fact that he's a mutant freak, what's unique about Wolverine's foe, Dirtnap?
A) He must be in physical contact with the Earth at all times.
B) He can transform himself into a choking cloud of dirt.
C) Every time he dies, he comes back to life manifesting a different mutant power.
D) He's a rat with a smiley-face painted on his butt.

2. After Keystone City recently just plain kicked the Flash out, he took up a job as protector of:
A) Salem, Mass.
B) Santa Marta, Calif.
C) Seattle, Wash.
D) New York City

3. What was the name of the bounty hunter that nearly busted Han Solo at the cantina in Mos Eisley?
A) Boba Fett
B) Figrin D'an
C) Greedo
D) Snaggletooth

4. When Lock-Up had Robin…uh, locked up in his basement, who were the Boy Wonder's jailmates?
A) Poison Ivy and the Scarecrow
B) Two-Face and Killer Moth
C) Croc and Clayface
D) The Menendez brothers, who the Boy Wonder slapped and told to stop crying already

5. It took long enough, but we finally found out the secret identity of the first Hobgoblin. He is…
A) Jason Macendale.
B) Ned Leeds.
C) Roderick Kingsley.
D) Ummm…the correct answer to this thing is "C," and if you're thinking, "Roderick Kingsley? Who the hell is *Roderick Kingsley?!?*", you ain't alone. Sheesh, talk about anticlimactic.

6. When the JLA fought the Hyperclan, what revelation came out of the furious fracas?
A) The Hyperclan turned out to be brainwashed former members of the JLA.
B) The Hyperclan turned out to be Martians bent on invading Earth.
C) The Hyperclan were actually the JLA of an alternate reality.
D) The Hyperclan liked corn.

7. What was the name of Kitty Pryde's dance instructor?
A) Lorna Dane
B) Stevie Hunter
C) Wanda Maximoff
D) Dian Belmont

8. What's the name of the part of Astro City that never sees sunlight, due to Mount Kirby blocking out the sun's rays?
A) Shadow Hill
B) Dark Commons
C) Eclipse Park
D) Pastyville, the chief importer of vitamin-D this side of Seattle

9. Which Green Lantern used Sinestro's yellow power ring for a time?
A) Guy Gardner
B) Hal Jordan
C) John Stewart
D) Kyle Rayner

10. Which of the following identities has Steve Rogers never gone by?
A) the Captain
B) Nomad
C) USAgent
D) Cap-Wolf

11. Chance Falconer's (y'know, of *Leave it to Chance*) pet dragon was named…
A) Lockheed.
B) Puff.
C) Ellegon.
D) St. George.

12. Moira MacTaggart's reality-altering, mutant-freak son is:
A) Proteus.
B) Mimic.
C) Changeling.
D) Carl.

13. How is the power of the Darkness passed on?
A) when the current wielder of the Darkness dies
B) in a yearly tournament where all those who believe themselves worthy battle to the death, and the victor claims the power until the next contest
C) at the moment of conception, but it lays dormant until the child turns 21
D) a suppository

14. When everybody in the Legion of Super-Heroes thought she was dead, just where was that intangible lass, Apparition, hiding out?
A) inside the Emerald Eye
B) The Phantom Zone
C) She was in the body of Ultra Boy. (Yowza!)
D) In one of them Darkness-suppositories. Yeesh, somebody get her a moist towelette.

15. Who did Robin recently "team up with" to catch Slyfox?
A) The Spoiler
B) Alfred
C) Roy Raymond, Jr., Manstalker
D) Wildcat

16. Which actual supervillain team has the Rhino never been a part of?
A) Sinister Syndicate
B) Masters of Evil
C) Emissaries of Evil
D) A.S.S. G.O.B.L.I.N.S. (Alliance of Subversive Soldiers Gesturing Obscenely By Licking Immigrant Navels Savagely)

17. What did J. Jonah Jameson's son John do for a living before he became a security guard at a mental institution?
A) He was a scientist at a top-secret government installation.
B) He was a police officer for the NYPD.
C) He was an astronaut for NASA.
D) He mooched money off his old man and lived in JJJ's basement watching old "Star Trek" episodes on tape and playing *Magic: The Gathering*.

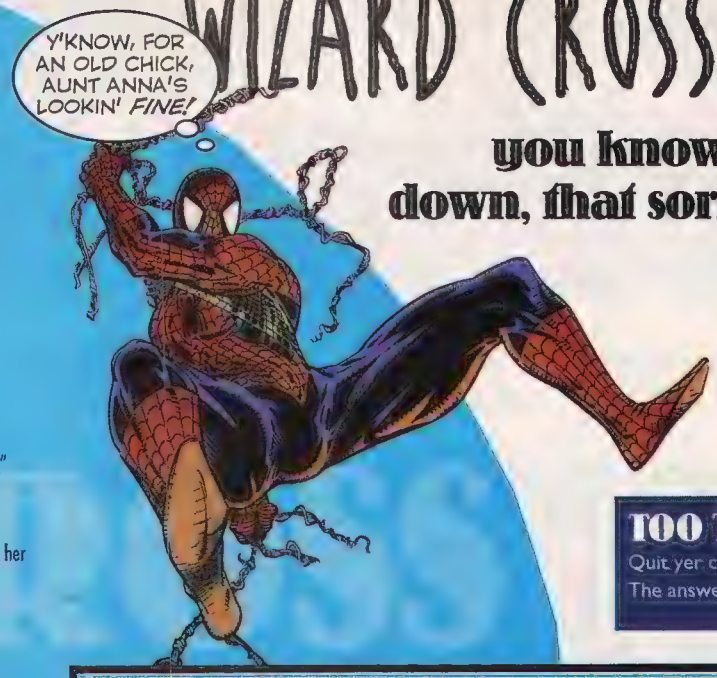
18. What disease is causing Superman's boss, Perry White, to miss so many days at the *Planet*?
A) the clench
B) AIDS
C) cancer
D) The Hershey squirts. Whew, that guy goes through Big Boy Depends like nobody's business.

19. Which group of teen superheroes got their powers as a result of being guinea pigs for experiments?
A) Troublemakers
B) the new new Teen Titans
C) Gen[13]
D) All of the above. Pretty original stuff, eh?

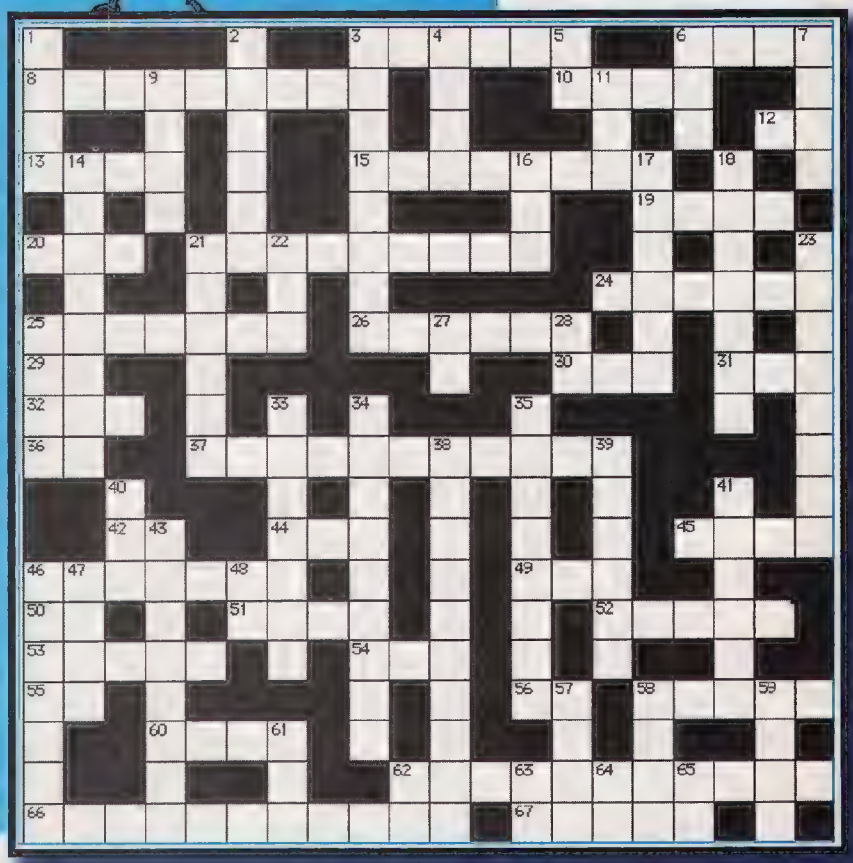
20. Who is directly responsible for the death of Captain America's little buddy, Bucky?
A) Baron Zemo
B) Red Skull
C) Baron Von Strucker
D) Dead? Who cares? We wanna know how he ended up a chick in "Heroes Reborn."

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff



TOO TOUGH?
Quit yer complainin'.
The answers are on page 206.



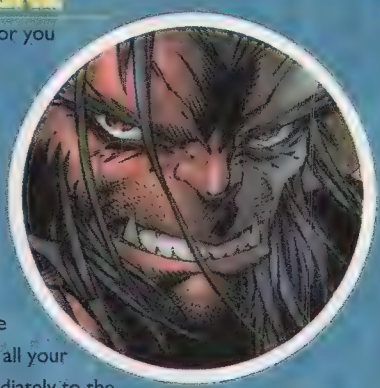
1. original Supergirl's name
2. silver-masked GI Joe villain
3. she runs Apokolips' orphanages; Granny _____
4. New Mutant Mirage's foe; Demon _____
5. Firestar and Nova's team; init.
6. Tomorrow Woman joined this team
7. 6 across was this
9. powerful Eternal
11. Robin's gal pal; nickname
14. Germanic Apokolips general
16. the Darkness can't have this
17. Apokolips torturer
18. son of Darkseid
21. 41 down's chair
22. Bug speech impediment
23. Darkseid's equation
25. Mr. Miracle
27. Jo Nah; init.
28. Ralph Dibny; init.
33. Big Barda's weapon
34. Darkseid's planet
35. how New Gods travel
38. Highfather's planet
39. *Jack Kirby's* _____ *World*
40. ex-Teen Titan Changeling
41. New Genesis scientist
43. powers the Mobius Chair
46. New Genesis bug warrior
47. Arthur Curry's new name
48. fear-filled comic company
57. Savage Dragon's buddy Peter Klaptin
58. Julie Pezzini's powerful sister
59. "Eat…my…justice!"
61. longtime DC writer; ___ Wein
62. well-known Batman writer and editor; init.
63. *Metaphysique* creator and Bat-artist; init.
64. Ms. Tree is this
65. *Mystery* ___ *Space*

3. stole Spidey's baby; Green _____
6. creator of New Gods; first name
8. city on Apokolips
10. Kitty Pryde can phase through it
12. Acclaim editor-in-chief; init.
13. dead wife of Highfather
15. ruler of Apokolips
19. writer of 5 down; _____ Skolnick
20. Eternal's mind
21. New Gods' sentient computer
24. newest of the New Gods
25. speedy New God
26. powers 21 across
29. new Captain America's partner; init.
30. old Teen Titans ally; the Mad ___
31. boxed with Superman in the '70s
32. Jaime Somers has a bionic ___
36. where Donald Blake works
37. Darkseid's uncle
42. *The Man Called* ___
44. Indiana Jones searched for this
45. Spidey's first name
46. "The City on the Edge of _____"
49. Asgardian war god
50. Molecule Man; init.
51. Batman wears a cape and this
52. 40 down loved her; Terminator used her
53. Picard's number one
54. *Avengers, Cable* artist Churchill
55. Chris Ware's *Library*; init.
56. *Cyberforce* writer; init.
58. Lobo slaughtered him
60. "No _____ shall escape my sight!"
62. Wonder Woman's original alias
66. belonging to JLA android
67. Captain Britain or artist Bolland

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WOLVERINE



AAAAUUUUGH! Run for you life! It's a vampire! Actually, it's not a vampire. It's Wolverine. And this is only a test of the Wolverine Crappy Continuity Emergency Service. If Wolvie were an actual vampire, you would have been instructed to burn all your *X-Men* and report immediately to the "Age of Apocalypse," where things make more sense.

Even though Wolvie's had the adamantium yanked out of his bones, been given weird-looking fangs and apparently lost his styling mousse, he remains A No. 1 from coast to coast. Makes you wonder how popular he'd be if he were portrayed in a more traditional Wolvie manner.

2) WITCHBLADE

Sara Pezzini is a cop by day. That's okay. Lotsa cops take second jobs at night. That's okay too. Most cops' second jobs are as security guards, private investigators, bodyguards, things like that. But Sara has a rather weird second job: She's the bearer of the Witchblade, an ancient mystical gauntlet that, in the immortal California words of a former Top Cow Comics spokesperson, "Like, totally combats evil." So Sara fights evil by day, fights evil by night and wears skimpy, skin-tight red dresses whenever possible. That keeps her pretty busy. We hope she at least gets a good dental plan out of all this work.

3) SPIDER-MAN

Yow! That's one sour-lookin' Spidey! He looks like someone just put peanut butter in his chocolate and he's ready to whip some ass. Actually, Spider-Man *should* be smilin' these days. After all, he's just found out that he has always been the real Peter Parker, the one and only Spider-Man all the time. His Saturday morning cartoon is pretty darned popular. He's married to a leggy supermodel. And he gets to be drawn by the likes of John Romita Jr. on a monthly basis. Put it all together and that's not a bad life for a superhero. Heck, it beats what that Spawn guy's got.

4) SPAWN

Now here's a guy who's got it tough. He's been assassinated, went to Hell, been resurrected as a Hellspawn, lives in an alley with a buncha skid-row bums and has a cybernetic gorilla looking to separate his head from his body. And speaking of heads—eeeewwwwuuu. As if it weren't bad enough that Spawn has raw meat for a *cabeza*, he's now got bugs in his mouth. Gross. But it's because of all this that Spawn is the ultimate underdog, and thus a rather sympathetic character. And that's why Spawn is pretty durned popular.

5) ROGUE

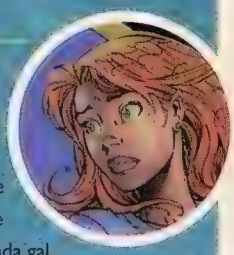
The thing we like about Rogue? Accessories. She's one chick who stays up to date in fashion. She probably subscribes to both *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*. She's sportin' that nifty headband, a stylin' belt (even though she usually wears a one-piece bodysuit and has no need for a belt), and always has a great hairdo. Heck, if it weren't for the fact that her mutant powers knock you unconscious if you touch her, we'd ask her out on a date sometime.

6) DARK CLAW

He's got a utility belt *and* metal claws! He's a savage, ass-whippin' warrior *and* a great detective! He's a dessert topping *and* a floor wax! He's Dark Claw, and hot dammit, everyone loves him! His second Amalgam appearance has kept him front and center in the minds of geeks everywhere, and fans are demanding more Dark Claw. Heck, they'd like to see Dark Claw comics, Dark Claw toys, Dark Claw Pez dispensers, Dark Claw Spinball Pinball...

7) BATMAN

Man, them's some ears! Ya ever notice that the size of Batman's ears change faster than the weather? Why is that? Are his ears actually radio antennas that go up when he's trying to tune in the ballgame? Are they little turkey meat thermometers that pop out to tell you that Batman's brain has been cooked to a succulent, juicy golden-brown? That's what we wanna know! Forget the mystery of "Who is Holiday?" Somebody explain those darned expand-o-ears to us already!

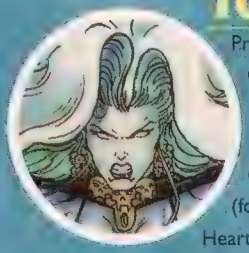


8) FAIRCHILD

Formula for a successful comic book character, Volume 312: Draw a red-haired (Hubba!), green-eyed (Hubba Hubba!) chick with legs up to her neck. Give her a micro-nose and those pouty lips. Then actually give her some smarts and make her a take-charge kinda gal, so all those slobberin' 14 year olds with an early pubescent fear of girls can relax as this li'l object of their desire tells *them* what to do. Now name her "Fairchild." You're done.

9) PREACHER

Jesse Custer, the Preacher, looks pretty scared in this shot. But he's got no reason to be frightened. See, he's got this thing on his side called "The Word." He says something to someone, and if the person he's talking to hears and understands him, he's compelled to do it. Jesse says, "Jump," someone jumps. Jesse says, "Gimme your pants," Jesse gets a new pair of Levis. We could have a lot of fun if we had "The Word." We're thinking free Taco Bell. Forever.



10) LADY DEATH

Product endorsements. That's what Chaos! Comics is missing with Lady Death. She could be the pasty spokesmodel for Prell shampoo (Look at that wavy bounce!), Visine (for clear eyes), and the Cross-Your-Heart bra (for lift-and-separate support). Heck, the Lady's a marketing goldmine waiting to happen! She hasn't clicked on Madison Avenue yet, but her comics sure have clicked with fans. As have her statues, posters and even drink coasters. Hey, maybe she's a goldmine already.

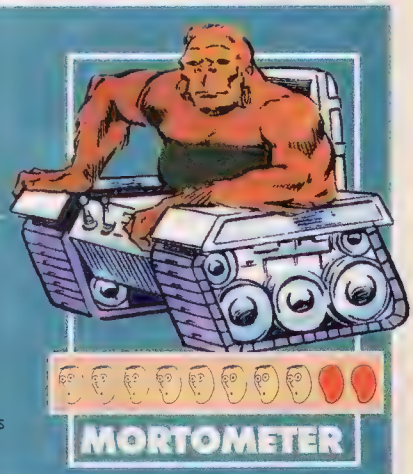
MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

APE X

It's half monkey, half Sherman tank! No, it's not the hottest toy since Tickle-Me Elmo...It's Ape X!

This 3-foot-4 instrument of furry justice was a mild-mannered banana-scarfin' ape when her trainer used her in an intelligence-increasing experiment. But when her trainer was killed, Ape X quite naturally turned to crime! Seeing the advantage of having a smart monkey on tank treads as part of its team, the Squadron Supreme (the Kmart Blue-Light Special version of the Avengers) modified her behavior and now she's a member in good standing. Mort City, meet the monkey!



BULL PEN

Filler Copy!

With the exception of the…*incident* that occured while waiting on line for "Star Wars: The Special Edition" (which, for fear of ending up doing a month's work of community service, we ain't puttin' in print), there's no wacky hijinks to report on this month. So, in an effort to fill space, let's take a gander at the most important comics in our collections and why they're so important…

Pat McCallum (editor-in-chief): "*Amazing Fantasy* #15 (first Spidey). A Spidey fan since before I could read, a 13-year-old me almost passed out when I saw it in a comic store. I made a promise: One day I'll own it. Five years later I got back into comics, visited that store on a whim and picked it up. Though later stolen, that comic meant the world to me."

Jim McLauchlin (senior staff writer): "*Watchmen* #4. I read it as a college freshman, long after I had given up comics in lieu of girls. It got me interested in reading comics again, which led to this…uh…wonderful career which I so…uh…enjoy."

Andrew Kardon (assistant editor): "*Animal Man* #15. It tugged at my heart with a story focusing on fishermen killing dolphins. I gave it to my girlfriend to read and she loved it, becoming more open to reading comics. Now I can share my love of comics with the most important person in my world."

Greg Orlando (copy editor): "*Amazing Spider-Man* #248. Few things in this world moved me as much as this story where Spidey visits a small boy who's dying of leukemia and also happens to be his biggest fan."

Mike Searle (*InQuest* editor): "*The Saga of the Swamp Thing* #21. Through the seriousness and imagination of writer Alan Moore, that comic opened my eyes to the power of the comic book medium."

One of the Damned

Andrew Kardon

assistant editor, *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I help outline all the issues and assign all the features to our lovely freelance staff, I head up "Basic Training" (contacting the artists and helping them create each column), I'm part of the "Skinny" Review Committee and I edit a number of the features and departments. I also make sure that on a daily basis, at least one Mego figure in my Mego House of Horrors has his pants down.

Your favorite section in *Wizard*?
I'd have to say the features, which I think have gotten better, more diverse and more fun.

What surprised you most about the Wizard offices?
The fact that such a small staff could put out a really cool magazine like this on a monthly basis…or the panties hanging from the Nightcrawler figure by the water cooler.

What's the most significant thing you've gotten out of working at Wizard?
For some bizarre reason, I've become gassier than I've ever been before. Maybe it has to do with all those Taco Bell, Wendy's and McDonald's lunches.

Favorite movie of all time?
"Better Off Dead"—it's John Cusack at his finest.

Favorite TV shows?
"Babylon 5," "The Prisoner," "The Dukes of Hazzard" and "What's Happening!"

Favorite musical performer?
Twisted Sister is still king of the hill. Dee Snider's got so much energy and humor, both of which translate into his music. And every time I talk to him he cracks me up. Go, Dee!

Who would play you in a movie?
Scott Grimes (Will on "Party of Five") or Gary Coleman. I'd push for Coleman.

People would be surprised to know that you…
…marked my scent on the grounds of Versailles during my post-college backpacking tour through Europe. Take that, Frenchies!

Favorite comics right now?
Astro City and *Preacher* are the two best comics being published today. I'd still like to say that it's *Captain America*, but, well, it's still not…though hopefully it will be if Waid and Garney return. And believe it or not, I really get a kick out of *Pineapple Man*.

What's your main goal in life?
Now that I've met Dee Snider (Go, Dee!), my ultimate goal is to write *Captain America*.

What superpower would you want, and why?
The ability to create cheese out of thin air. Mmmm…cheese.

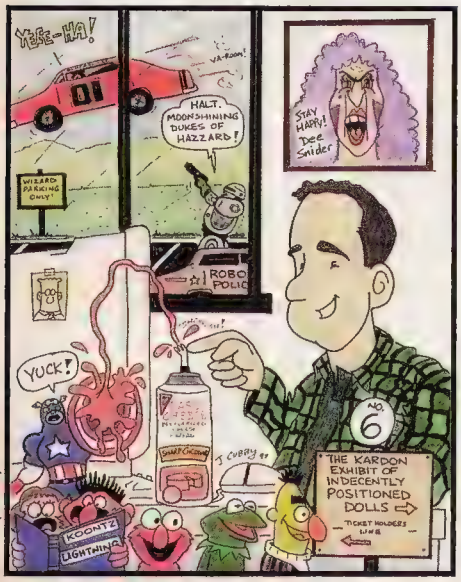


Illustration by Jim Cubby

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 ways Paramount is messin' with 'Star Trek' to cash in on the 'Star Wars' craze

10. "Obi-Wan Picard? Now *that's* a name I haven't heard in a long time…"
9. Spock is seduced by the "Dark Side of the Katra," and starts dressing all in black and throwing Plomeec soup against the wall with the power of his mind.
8. In a newly discovered episode, we learn that Kirk's mentor was a three-foot-tall green muppet that sounds curiously like Fozzie Bear.
7. To defeat the evil Klingon Empire in one last heated battle, the Federation gains a surprise ally in an army of tribbles armed with spears and rocks!
6. Tuvok starts hocking Colt 45 beer.
5. Data keeps losing his arms and legs in hilariously violent ways!
4. Paramount re-edits "Star Trek III" so that when the Bird of Prey de-cloaks, it fires first, misses completely and then gets shot.
3. The Borg capture the *Voyager* crew and stick Chakotay in a steel bikini.
2. ILM digitizes in Ricardo Montalban's manly chest from "Space Seed" onto the older Khan's fake rubber chest in "Star Trek II."
1. Data now has to stick a small phallic symbol into wall sockets to open doors.

CONTEST WINNERS

ASH, *Wizard* #65: Sean Yang, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
CATWOMAN, #65: Kirk O. Cooley, Ft. Collins, Colo. (The safe combination was 15 right, 23 left and 17 right!)
MARS ATTACKS, #65: Anthony Bergeron, St. Paul, Minn. Anthony had Mars attack the St. Paul Winter Carnival, including its enormous ice palaces, noting, "When it's 30° below outside, people don't want to stand around and look at a castle made of ice."
MEGACON, #65: Ralph Zientara, Germantown, Wis.

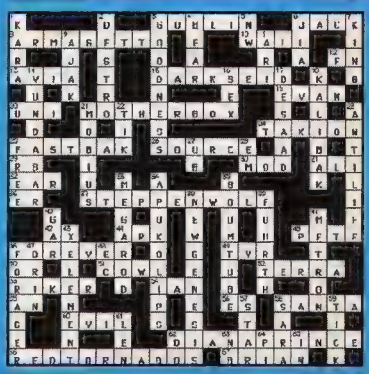
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 202

1. D	5. C	9. A	13. C	17. C
2. B	6. B	10. C	14. C	18. C
3. C	7. B	11. D	15. C	19. D
4. B	8. A	12. A	16. B	20. A

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 203



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July 4-6 Rosemont Convention Center

Here's your once in a lifetime chance to spend July 4th weekend with all the geeks at *Wizard,* along with such awesome guests as Frank Miller, Jim Lee, Brian Pulido, Alex Ross, Mark Waid and many more! Plus, you'll meet the Grand Fromage himself, Gareb Shamus!

JOIN THE STARS!

- *STAR TREK's* George Takei & Nichelle Nichols
- *STAR WARS* "Men Behind the Mask Tour"
- Jim Lee
- Frank Miller
- James Robinson
- Kurt Busiek
- Brian Pulido
- Alex Ross
- Mark Waid
- Joe Quesada
- Jimmy Palmiotti
- Rob Liefeld
- Jeff Smith
- Billy Tucci
- Charles Vess
- Brandon Peterson
- Batt
- David Finch
- David Wohl
- Amanda Conner
- Joe Jusko
- Peter David
- Terry Moore
- David Mack
- Geof Darrow
- Julius Schwartz
- Drew Hayes
- Richard & Wendy Pini
- Greg Hyland
- Angel Medina
- Joe Monks
- Larry Marder
- Gary Gianni
- Everette Hartsoe
- Mike Wolfer
- Fabian Nicieza
- Linda Medley
- Mark Crilley
- Drew Hayes
- Vampirella
- Hart Fisher
- Rob Prior
- Brian Bendis
- Steven T. Seagle
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- Roel
- Robb Horan
- Marc Hempel

AND MORE!

PRIZES

Grand Prize (1):

One lucky, randomly-drawn entry will get free round-trip air fare from anywhere in the continental United States to Chicago, VIP admission to the con, two nights hotel accommodations and a $100 shopping spree from our buddies at Chicago Comics, Graham Crackers Comics, Iguana's Comic Book Cafe and Psycho Candy (Check 'em out at the con!).

HURRY — Entries must be postmarked by June 6th, 1997!
Send your completed coupon and, if you want, pre-registration payment to:

Chicago Comicon Contest:
Code: W70
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

TICKETS	1-DAY	3-DAY	NEW
Adult	$15.00	$35.00	Superman Chromium Badges!
Ages 6-12	$7.50*	$17.50*	
Children under 6 FREE!*		* with the purchase of an adult ticket.	

To enter the contest, just fill out this coupon. If you want to pre-register for the awesome '97 Chicago Comicon with actual money, you can do that too (We'll just refund your payment if you're our lucky winner.). REGISTER NOW and get a free exclusive three-panel *Witchblade* chromium card with art by Mike Turner!

Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press and their immediate families. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, and zip code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Chicago Comicon Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 6, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected randomly from properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on June 9, 1997.

For the name of the winner, available after June 9, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Chicago Comicon Winner, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Chicago Comicon Contest Entry & Registration Form

POSTMARK DEADLINE IS JUNE 6, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

❑ I want to order tix and enter the contest (I get a refund if I win!)

❑ Payment enclosed, all checks made out to Chicago Comicon or charge my ❑ Visa ❑ MC ❑ Discover

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

❑ Please just enter me in the contest!

W70

TICKETS ❑ All 3 days ❑ Friday ❑ Saturday ❑ Sunday

WIZARD profile

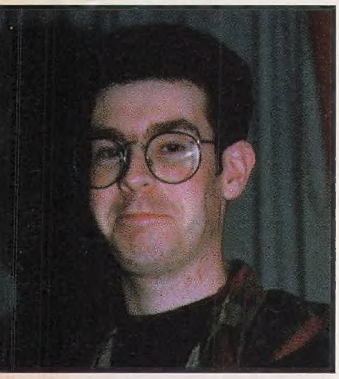
Here's looking at...

BRETT BOOTH

Brett Booth is a firm believer in keeping it all in the family. Consequently, when the 24-year-old Florida resident knocks out the latest page of *Fantastic Four*, he doesn't have to look any further than the table across his studio to get a critical opinion. "My girlfriend thinks what I do is fine," chuckles Booth, "but then she's my colorist *and* my girlfriend, so I guess she's a little bit biased."

Earning his career stripes by drawing the likes of *StormWatch*, *Backlash* and *The Kindred*, Booth learned to draw at an early age during long winter days in Pennsylvania. Comics were nowhere in the picture until he reached the 9th grade and study hall. "I had time on my hands, and so I asked an artist friend of mine to loan me some comics to draw. The book he gave me was *Classic X-Men* #1. I looked at that Art Adams art and said, 'Cool!' " By the time he reached the 10th grade, Booth was committed to a comic book career but attended the International College of Fine Arts to get a commercial arts degree.

Following graduation, he worked at a comic book store and re-entered the comic art life when he happened upon a talent search that appeared in *WildC.A.T.s* #2. "I sent some submissions to Jim Lee, and four days later he called and requested a pin-up for a *WildC.A.T.s* #0 ad. Then I did some practice layouts for Jim and he invited me out to the studio. Things just kind of went from there."



courtesy of Brett Booth

Booth's career took off on *StormWatch* with art chores on issues #4, #0 and #5. He followed that with *The Kindred* #1-#4, and writing and drawing *Backlash* #1-#8 and *Backlash/Spider-Man* #1-#2, along with penciling a number of other *Backlash* issues and co-writing the entire run. Unfortunately, to make time for the last six issues of the "Heroes Reborn" version of *Fantastic Four*, Booth needs a break from the character he helped create. So, while May's *Backlash* #32 is the final issue of the series, Booth will be launching *WildCORE* later this year. He describes this new team book, which stars Backlash, as featuring a sister group to WildC.A.T.s—a more stealth-like, hit-and-run team.

When it comes to style, though, Booth is typical of the new breed of comic book artist. He's quick on the pencil, and his style is an ongoing evolution based on the best of what he sees around him. "I've always followed the good artists—like George Pérez and Art Adams—because I want to learn from these guys. I'm pretty fast and I make deadlines. That's a big deal nowadays. It takes longer to draw a page than it used to, because kids still want the big splash panels and good stories, but they also want the cool detail."

Brett Booth is living the life he was always confident he could live. And it all stems from those study hall days. "I swore on my grandfather's grave that I was going to draw comic books. That has to be one of the few times that swearing produced some good results."

By Marc Shapiro

First comic read...
Alpha Flight #18. I loved Guardian's costume!

Favorite comics of all time...
The *Daredevil* "Born Again" story [*Daredevil* #227-#233]. The story was really good, but the art was just incredible. They just used so many different techniques.

Favorite work of your own...
Backlash/Spider-Man #1. I loved drawing Spider-Man.

Superpower you would most want...
Superspeed, so I can pencil these pages faster.

Comics you currently read...
I used to read *The Flash* until artist Oscar Jimenez left. He had a really simple but complex style. Now, I don't really have time to keep up with any titles.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
As a kid, little action figures whose brains glow. As an adult, my "Jurassic Park" T-Rex.

Things you collect...
Star Trek, Spider-Man and Spawn toys

Person you would most want to meet...
David Mazzucchelli [artist on *Daredevil*'s "Born Again"]. I just love his stuff.

Person who would play you in a movie about yourself...
Me. I could use the money.

Favorite cartoon...
"Thundercats." It was incredibly animated.

Person you would most like to work with...
Author Robert Bakker. He just has this way of making things come alive. He's got a lot of energy.

Favorite musical performers...
All the one-hit wonders from the '80s.

Favorite TV show...
"The X-Files." I love the paranormal stuff, and Scully's a babe.

Last good movie you saw...
"The Nutty Professor." I just like it when Eddie Murphy plays 100 different roles.

Last good book you read...
Dinosaur Heresies, by Robert Bakker. It's got dinosaurs! And I love the way Bakker tells a story.

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I'd get all my books done for the next 25 years. W

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